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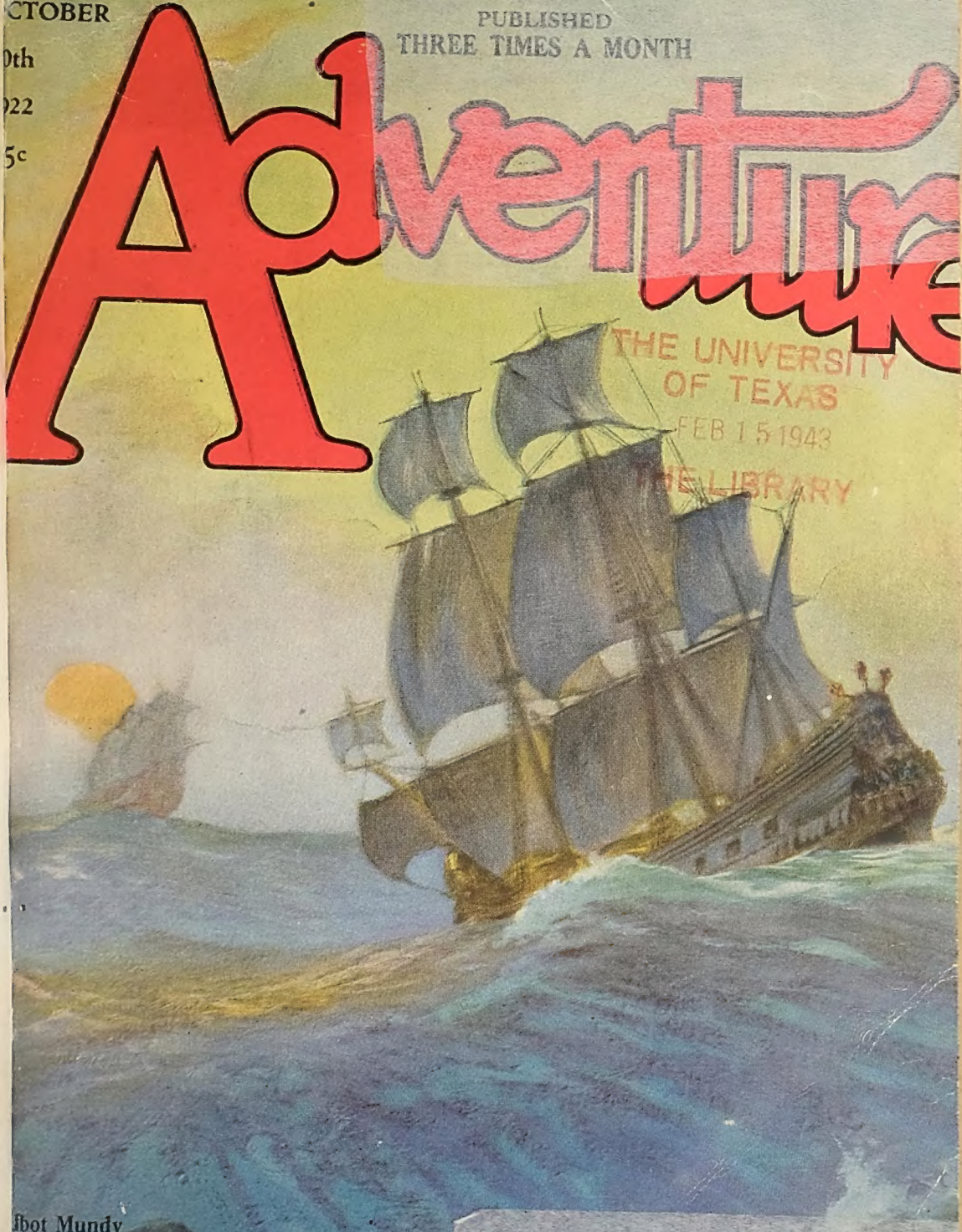

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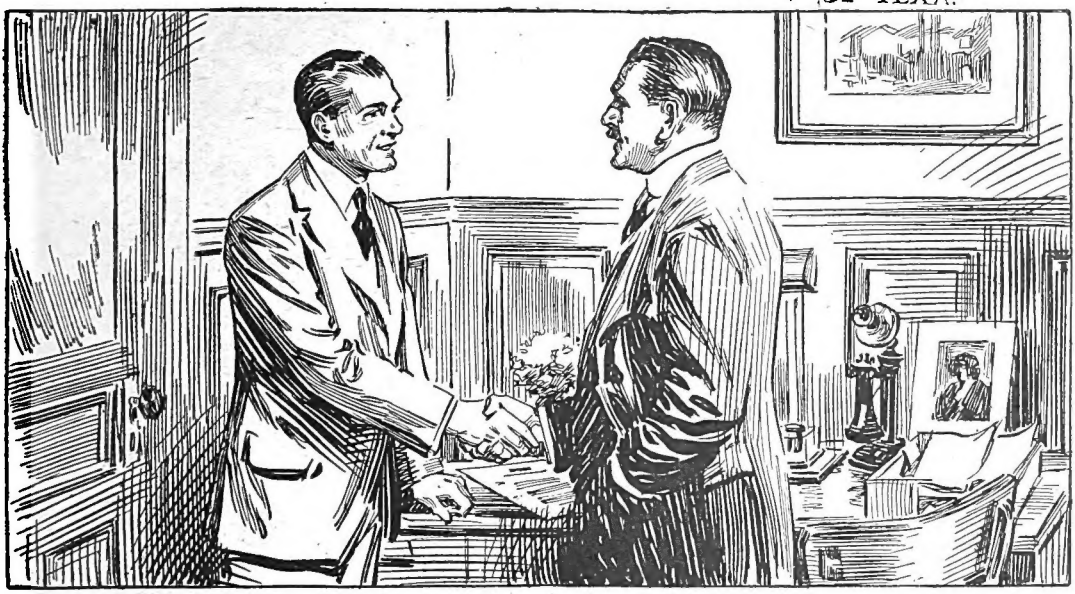

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IT was written to his employer by the International Correspondence Schools. It told how "Robert Johnson had enrolled for a course of home-study and had received a mark of 94 for his first lesson."

Bob answered the summons to the Chief's office with just a little fear and trembling, for a lot of men were being dropped—a lot more were having their pay reduced.

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ADVENTURE
Oct. 10th, 1922

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Volume 37
Number 1

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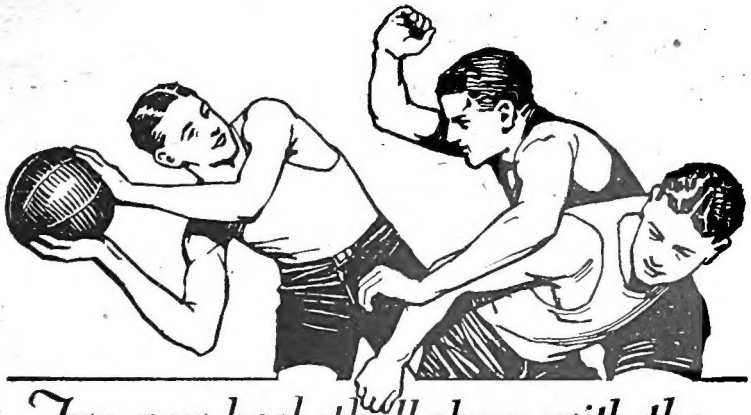

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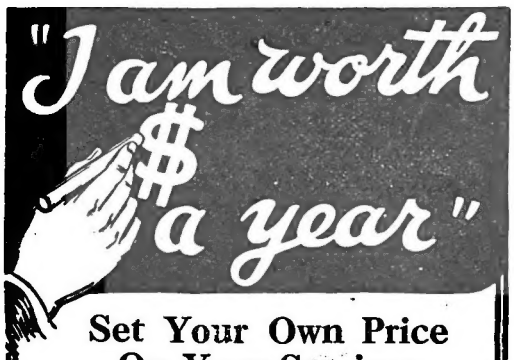

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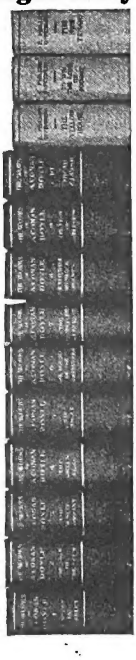

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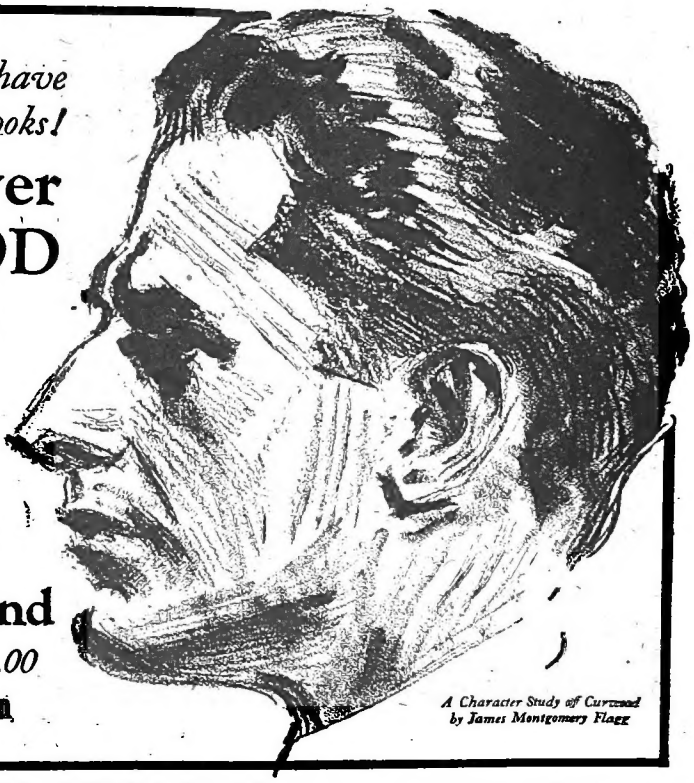

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Adventure

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WHAT with the machinations of *Zoronna Symondi*, "the most wicked of women," and the blackmailing schemes of the giant dwarf, the murderer *Horrezko*, *Don Everhard* treads a tangled trail in New York's underworld. "HORREZKO," a novel by Gordon Young, complete in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

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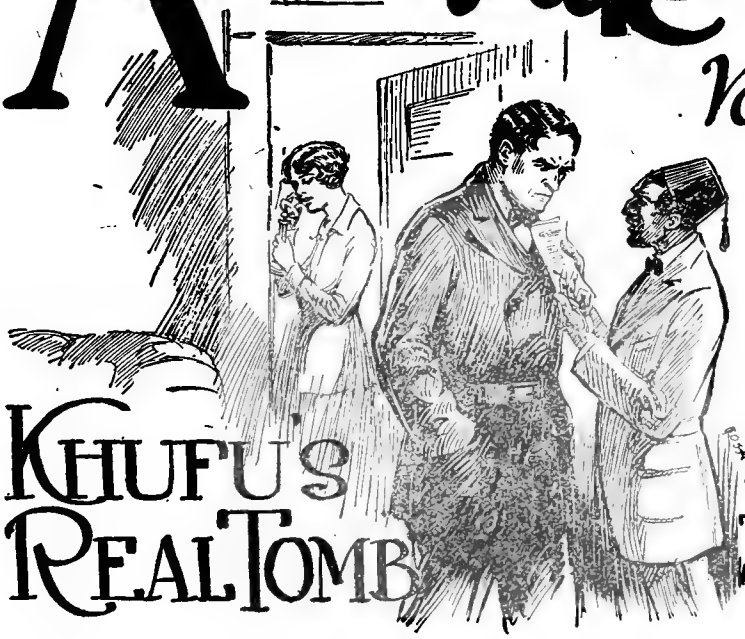

KHUFU'S REAL TOMB

A Complete Novel by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "A Secret Society," "Moses and Mrs. Aintree," etc.

CHAPTER I

Which is a kind of preface.

WE AMERICANS are ostriches. We stick well-meaning heads into the political sands of these United States, swear—probably correctly—they are better than all other sands, and accordingly declare ourselves free forever from entangling alliances. "*Struthio camelus*," whose plumes are plucked for market while his head stowed snugly in a stocking "sees no evil, hears no evil, speaks no evil," and who then struts about asserting that a plucked and smarting rump is fashionable, ought to be our national bird, not the all-seeing eagle.

But this isn't an effort to reform the United States. We're the finest there is or ever was, only rather more entangled with the old world than we think.

The Great Pyramid of Gizeh is older than the Declaration of Independence, and its claims continue to have precedence, our elected statesmen notwithstanding. Statesmen understand not much beyond the drift of popular opinion; but conspirators have always understood that the safest place to conspire in is the center of the establishment they aim at.

The men whose lives are spent mainly in the open are the widest awake. To assert the contrary is only another phase of the ostrich habit. If a man wipes his knife on the seat of his pants and knows where the cinnamon bear will be rooting at six a.m., he's not necessarily less enlightened than the fellow who thinks he knows what the editorials in the morning paper really mean. That partly explains why the best policemen come from the plow-tail and the woods, and cities don't often produce Abe Lincolns.

All this sounds rather far from Egypt

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and the Pyramid of Gizeh, but is not. Few people know or knew why the Great Pyramid was built. Hundreds of thousands toiled at the making of it, most of whom thought they knew, just as most of the people who take the subway in the morning think they know why, and are deluded. They believed what they were told. They were told what was considered good for them to think. The men who told them knew hardly any more but were getting a profit, and hard cash always did look like Euclid's Q. E. D. But the men who really did know why the Pyramid was building held their tongues and toiled elsewhere, also for cash, except Khufu himself, who was the arch-type of perfect profiteers.

Khufu was king of Upper and Lower Egypt in those days. Cash dividends did not trouble him much, for he had the taxes to draw on and auditors passed his vouchers without comment. Consequently the man in the street of today might be paying higher taxes on account of old Khufu, if Joan Angela Leich hadn't just contrived to miss me with her Ford one dark night on the Geiger Trail; which sounds incredible.

But so is Joan Angela incredible; I'm coming to her presently. Everybody knows her who isn't fenced in by apartment-house blocks. If she had pushed me over the edge of the Geiger that night, you, who read this, would be paying for more armaments.

But it was Khufu who started the trouble. He is better known to fame as Cheops, and we know pretty well what he looked like.

He was a calm, proud, confident-appearing man, with an obvious sense of his own importance and a smile that seemed to say: "Carry on, boys. What's good for me is good for you." Being city folk he had them all in one place where they had got to listen. Spell-binders laid the argument on thick in one direction; in the other the overseers laid on the lash; and the minstrels, who were the equivalent of the daily press in those days, praised all concerned.

But right here I'm going to be called in question by the Egyptologists unless I hasten to explain. It will be said with a certain amount of surface truth that the Egyptians who labored at building the Pyramid were peasants on vacation. Work ceased in the fields when the Nile had overflowed and they were kept out of mischief by thoughtful superiors, who provided wholesome amusement with educational value that incidentally promoted trade. When the Nile receded at the end of three months, those who had survived the education were permitted to return home and go to work in the fields again, in order to raise crops, with which to pay the taxes, that should keep the ball a-rolling and Jack-Pharaoh's pyramid a-building again next season. That is what the text-book writers will assert.

But those peasants were city folk. Egypt was always one great straggling city, with one wide avenue—the Nile—running straight down the middle of it. Everybody lived on Main Street, and they all do still; there was, and is, nowhere else to live, and if the Nile were to dry up Egypt would disappear.

Living on one long street, Egyptians all look alike, think alike, and react to the same inducements. You can't change the Nile, but it will change you, and if you stay there long enough will pattern you until you resemble all the others. Egypt has been invaded scores of times, overrun, looted, conquered, and made to pay tribute; its women have been forced to intermarry with the conquerors, because they are beautiful women with the eyes of gazelles and with a properly respectful attitude toward the male; so the pure-blooded Egyptian no longer exists. Nevertheless, the Egyptian of today is exactly like the Egyptian of four thousand years ago, and so is Egypt, except that nowadays you see blue cotton dungarees in place of unbleached linen; a corrupt style of near-French architecture; and two streets instead of one, since the foreigner built the railway.

Then, just as now, there was always a small crowd of foreigners running things, while the native Egyptian did the work. It was a foreigner who suggested the Great Pyramid to Pharaoh, and who doubtless drafted the design and got the contract. No Egyptian ever lived who was capable of designing it. Khufu provided the money and labor, but there is always some one pulling strings behind the autocrat.

In a later Pharaoh's day another foreigner, Joseph by name, thought of cornering corn. Still another foreigner, Lesseps by name, conceived the Suez Canal and put that through. Only the dirt was shifted by Egyptians because they are Egyptians and the dividends go elsewhere for the same reason.

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You can't change Egypt. Not even its religion has changed except on the surface. The religion of the educated classes century by century may be the nominal creed of the laborer, but it has never got under his skin. He was always a fatalist, always a believer in brute force, born, bred, beaten and buried on the Nile, and tributary to it all his days; and if you want to start trouble on the Nile now you can do it exactly as it was done in Pharaoh's time.

Pharaoh's religion was more than perfunctory, or he would never have run the prodigious political risk of forcing gangs of a hundred thousand men to labor in three-month tricks for thirty years. The priests put him up to it, of course. Pharaoh believed that his future in the next world depended wholly on the amount of material preparation that he made for it in this.

He was not only an arch-profiteer. He pyramided profits. He conceived the idea—or priests conceived it for him—of taking the next world by storm. He would be a king for all eternity. He would outdo all the aristocracy who had had themselves entombed in opulence for generations past.

The peasantry—the real Egyptians, that is, who lived on Main Street and paid taxes or were whipped—were no more impressed by that theory than they are by the Sermon on the Mount today. They had a more pragmatic, Nile mud point of view. They wondered, just as they do today if any one propounds a theory to them, whether there was money in it. It was obvious to them that there was. There was their money in it. Every Pharaoh, and every high official who got buried, had as much of the tax-money as he could scrape out of the treasury buried with him for his use in the next world. The dwellers on Main Street, preferring this world to the next, and having toiled in the sun for twelve hours a day to earn that money, did some good, plain, Nile mud thinking; and the result was what you might expect.

It can't have been long before the insurance companies, if there were any, who underwrote burglary risks on mausoleums went out of business. It got so that a Pharaoh's mummy was hardly set stiff before the boys were out with pickaxes to break the door down and get the treasure out of the vault. It was no use putting a guard before the door, because you can always bribe the guard in Egypt anyhow, and the guard, being peasants in uniform, would be quite as anxious to get their share of the loot as anybody else. No doubt a few got caught and hanged, or flayed alive, or whatever was considered suitable for that offense in those days, but the number of kings' and noblemen's tombs that were not broken open and robbed was zero, and that was all about it. The cash went into circulation again.

So succeeding kings and noblemen took thought. They appealed to the public sense of decency, only to find that there was none. They got the priests to threaten damnation in the next world as the sure penalty for robbing tombs, only to discover that the boys who did the robbing didn't take much stock in the next world anyhow, but were dead set on getting what small comfort could be had in this. The nobility raised the taxes, strafed whole districts with extra hard labor, issued proclamations, passed laws forbidding any one below the rank of nobleman to be seen near a cemetery, imported guards from other countries—and all to no effect. Bury a Pharaoh, and the boys got away with his baggage, as often as not in broad daylight, almost before he'd started on his journey to the world beyond.

So they changed part of the plan. It was decided that secrecy would solve the problem. Laws were passed forbidding any one to know where a Pharaoh was buried. The head undertakers enjoyed a monopoly, and held their tongues for business reasons. Undertakers' helpers came cheap, so they were all killed and shipped along with Pharaoh to be useful to him in the next world. The mausoleum was underground out of sight in an unfrequented spot, and the sand was tidily arranged on top to look as if nothing but the desert wind had ever ruffled it. The living nobility breathed again.

But all they had accomplished was to add a sporting zest to what had hitherto been humdrum certainty. The boys had to go prospecting now, and there's no doubt whatever they found the loot, getting away with it all the more profitably because there were no expensive imported guards to be bribed. So the upper classes had to think again.

They did not abandon the secrecy theory. Rather they proceeded to improve on it. A Pharaoh would start to build his tomb

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as soon as he came to the throne and had finished maligning his predecessor. He constructed false tombs near by to deceive prospectors. Then, to the real tomb, he had long dummy tunnels driven, leading to a pit, which was dumped full of rock; and on the far side of the pit was the real passage leading to the place where his corpse would lie in state.

But the prospectors soon discovered that trick, and got so that a Pharaoh couldn't be certain of getting to heaven with a small coin in his jeans.

About that time the easiest way to make money in Egypt was to come along with an intricate plan for an undiscoverable tomb; but as they had no patent office, and any one who had the price could imitate the plans, tombs soon got stereotyped again, and once one real entrance had been discovered it became a comparatively simple matter to repeat the process and open every rich man's tomb on the country-side.

Things had reached the point where Pharaoh and his friends didn't know what the rising generation was coming to, when who should ascend the throne but Khufu, otherwise known as Cheops. He went through the usual process of removing his predecessor's signature from all the public monuments in order to call attention to his own omnipotence, and then proceeded to entertain a distinguished stranger.

Some say that this stranger was Job, the hero of the Old Testament drama. He was certainly an architect and a man of genius. He laughed when Pharaoh told him of the hard work it was for a decent fellow to get to heaven nowadays without arriving like a common tramp.

"Suppose I show you a real idea," he suggested. "If I draft out a plan by which nobody will ever find your real tomb, Khufu, will you give me the contract for the job?"

The plans were produced, and they were marvelous. No doubt there was a cost plus basis contract attached with red tape and sealing-wax. Pharaoh signed that, and for thirty years the laborers—the tax-payers that is—of Egypt toiled at the building of what they were told was to be the largest and most magnificent tomb the world had ever seen.

Meanwhile, very secretly and quite a long way off, other workmen were digging the real tomb; and it was into the real one, when Khufu died, that his body and most of his treasure were smuggled, although the public funeral was held at the base of the Great Pyramid, while the population stood around and cursed the tyrant who had forced them to build such a mausoleum for his bones.

The pyramid was so well built, and on such a titanic scale that the tax-payers, who had built it, knew better than to try to open that; so for thousands of years it stood intact, with Khufu's bones and Khufu's treasure presumably inside. Nobody hunted for his real grave, because everybody knew that he was buried in the pyramid.

But when at last a conquering Moslem, Mahmoun by name, forced his way into the pyramid to get the treasure out, he found it absolutely empty, except for a great stone chest that had no lid. He naturally jumped to the conclusion that tomb-robbers had been in there ahead of him. But how I came to know that Mahmoun was wrong and what Joan Angela Leich and the man in the street in the U. S. A. had to do with it shall all be unfolded in the proper order.

CHAPTER II

"Moustapha Pasha!"

I NOW go forward to the Geiger Trail one dark night in 1920. I was driving a Ford up the winding, seven-mile grade toward Virginia City, wondering at the prodigious guts of the men and women who crossed a continent to tear the inside out of those mountains with pick and shovel. I still maintain that the accident was Joan Angela's fault entirely.

Her Ford, coming down-hill, struck mine very nearly head-on. Her lights were out and her brake-bands burning, so she enjoyed the full advantage of surprize as well as impetus, and it was only a friendly rock at the edge of the road that caught my front axle and saved car and me from falling a couple of hundred feet.

"Why didn't you get out of the way?" laughed a musical voice. "Are you hurt?"

I proved I wasn't by scrambling out.

"Joan Angela Leich," I exclaimed, "or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Why Jeff Ramsden! Shake hands! I saw you last in Egypt, laying out about a hundred natives with a pick-handle!"

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"You got me into that mess!" I laughed. "Here's some more of your doing! D'you expect me to walk all the rest of the way up-hill?"

"You enjoyed the last mess I got you into," she retorted. "Your car's in the way. Push it right over, and I'll buy you a new one."

"'Tisn't mine," I said. "I hired it."

"I'll give him this in place of it. This is less than a month old. It's a fair swap. Go on, push yours over."

I made the attempt, but the front axle was bent and had caught on the rock like a yoke. I started to hunt in the dark for something that would do, but she backed her car far enough up the trail to descend again and bunt mine over. I had forgotten to turn off the switch, so the thing caught fire and looked pretty good as it went catapulting down the cliff-side.

"Now what'll we do?" she demanded. "My brakes won't hold. Think of something, quick!"

I found a place where there was room to turn by maneuvering carefully, and stood guard at the edge of the precipice while she did the shunting. Then I climbed in.

"Drive up-hill, drop me at Virginia City, and return to where you came from," I suggested.

"Nothing doing! I'm on my way to Reno, and you're the very man I need. Fun going down-hill backwards!"

You need no education to enjoy Joan Angela, so there were compensations. Her grand-dad and her father hiked it across the continent in '49 or '50, her father, who was about seven years old at that time, crossing the Six-milē Desert on the back of the last remaining mule. The grand-dad left the son with a claim or two that proved bonanzas; and when the son died he left Joan Angela about a million dollars and a hundred-thousand-acre ranch in California.

She was twenty-one exactly when the War broke out; I know that, for I have seen her passport; and it was her war right from the start. She decided to run something, and she did. During her absence abroad, her manager, the son of her father's closest friend, found oil on her ranch, so there's no real reason why she should select a Ford to make long journeys in.

She's tall—maybe a mite too tall for some folks' notions—and mid-Victorian mammas would never have approved of her, because she's no more coy, or shy, or artful than the blue sky overhead. She has violet eyes, riotous hair of a shade between brown and gold, a straight, shapely little nose, a mouth that is all laughter, and a way of carrying herself that puts you in mind of all out-doors. I've seen her in evening dress with diamonds on; and much more frequently in riding-breeches and a soft felt hat; but there's always the same effect of natural born honesty and laughter and love of trees and things and people. She's not a woman who wants to ape men, but a woman who can mix with men without being soiled or spoiled. For the rest, she's not married yet, so there's a chance for all of us except me. She turned me down long ago.

"Some one told me you'd gone into business with Meldrum Strange; that's why I was so glad to meet you," she explained as we backed down-hill.

I swallowed that compliment, and answered truthfuly.

"D'you suppose he'd sell out to me?" she asked, and again I told truth.

"He feels like a great strong spider in the middle of a web, and he loves the sensation."

"Well, would he let me buy into the firm?"

"Not if he takes my advice, Joan Angela!"

"What have you got it in for me about?"

"We're steady-going, plodding, conservative, cautious, patient, counting on the long swing, and exceedingly careful before we leap into anything."

"Old fogeys! Well, would you timid old ladies let me hire your firm for an investigation?"

"It all depends," I said. "We're at the foot of the trail now; you can turn round and go forward."

"Thanks! Depends on what? Where were you going when I ran into you?"

"Can't let mines alone," I answered. "Have to go, look, see. My trade, you know. Had a case not far from here. The man got drowned in Lake Tahoe,* and the woman was a poor fish anyhow; the case against her has just been dropped."

"Who was the woman?"

"A Mrs. Aintree."

"That's funny."

"Nothing very funny about her; she's——"

* The Story of "Moses and Mrs. Aintree," September 10th *Adventure.*

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"It's extremely funny," Joan Angela corrected. "Do you believe in coincidences?"

"As meeting you tonight, for instance?"

"Partly. And Mrs. Aintree. So she's——"

"A crook," I said, preferring to put the conversation on a basis of solid fact.

"Um-m-m! That accounts for a whole lot," said Joan Angela.

And for a while after that she sat silent, driving the Ford without lights at much higher speed than the law permits or than the manufacturer intended.

"I'm on the way to Reno more or less on Mrs. Aintree's account," she said, slowing down at last. "She gave a man a letter of introduction to me, and he's in Reno now. Now that I know Mrs. Aintree is a crook I want this man investigated more than ever."

"What's his name, for instance?"

"Moustapha Pasha."

I whistled. You don't look for men of his type or nationality in Nevada.

"You know him?"

"Noureddin Moustapha Pasha, of Cairo, Egypt? You bet I know him."

"He's a crook, too, isn't he?"

"I wouldn't lend him a match," I answered. "Is he after your money?"

"No. He wants to pay me money. You remember when the War started I went over. They were long-horns and wouldn't let me in; all they offered was to take my money and give me a swell job in an armchair, looking pretty. I didn't fall for that, and there wasn't anything in England I liked to take hold of, although I lent a hand here and there washing feet in hospitals and things like that. There were other women who could do that better. Finally I came across some wounded Indians, and heard from them about the enormous camps in Egypt. The military tried to stop me from going to Egypt, but I worked it through the bankers, by transferring money to Cairo. They had to give me a permit to travel for business reasons. We got torpedoed in the Mediterranean, and that was worth the trip, even if nothing else had happened. By the time I got to Egypt, the Turks were in the War, and it looked like plenty doing.

"Well, it was the same old story. All they seemed to think I'd come for was to flirt—dinners and dances and all that rot. But there were lots of Indian soldiers, and although I couldn't talk a word of their language I could see they were having a perfectly beastly time, with nobody entertaining them or anything. I'm not long on entertaining people, but there was a fat fool of a general there, who'd do anything if you'd only let him google at you; I got him to sign some permits, and went and bought a lot of land that everybody said was no good because it was too far from the Nile. You remember the piece?"

"You bet I remember it! That was where I had to lay out those *felaheen* with a pick-handle. Lucky for you I made a side-trip to see what tents were doing in such a wilderness."

" 'Tisn't a wilderness! There's a good well. I never found out why those *felaheen* wanted to drive me away. I'd paid at least three times what the land was worth, and it wasn't any good to them for crops or anything. However, an officer came along that afternoon, you remember, and conscripted the lot of them for the labor gang. Arrested you, too, didn't he, for being in Egypt without a permit?"

"Yes. It meant nothing in his life that permits weren't being issued in Abyssinia. He took me down to Cairo in a sheep-truck on my own first class ticket; but go on."

"Well, I put my own gang to work, and it was a good gang. We built a camp big enough to hold at least a thousand men in comfort. And after the English generals had organized a few disasters—'feeling out the Turkish positions,' I believe they called it—there were lots of wounded Indians with nowhere much to go. I had it all my own way then; they had to use that camp on my terms, and we had it full of Indians right up until the Armistice. The Indians were good and grateful and no trouble at all—I mean as far as their behavior went.

"As soon as the Armistice was signed I quit and came home. There's oil on my place, you know, and all the sharks in California, and a whole lot more from the East, were trying to get options on the property from my manager. I wish you'd seen the rush when I showed up! I listened to more black-faced lies and blarney in five days than I'd heard all through the War, but they got wise finally, and we've got the thing going in first-class shape now—rigs and pumps all over the place, and our own pipe-line. Never borrowed a nickel."

"Who are 'we'?" I asked her.

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"Just me and the manager. I own the whole shooting-match. Well, I kept the title to those acres in Egypt. You couldn't have sold them for a song. I'd about forgotten that I owned the land, although I left a wounded British Tommy in charge of it, just to see that the Gyppies didn't steal the holes off the nails. However, about a month ago along comes this Moustapha Pasha, and wants to buy the land. I thought it funny he should come all that way, when he could have done as well by mail, but I'd have sold him the property for almost any price he'd cared to offer, if his lies hadn't made me suspicious. There wasn't any sense in them. I asked him out of curiosity what he proposed to do with the property, and he said some friends of his intended to make a hotel out of it!

"You could no more make a hotel out of that place than out of a pig-stye in the sage-brush. Nobody would go there. There wouldn't be anything to do if they did go there. It's too far from the Nile, too far from the railway, too far from the mountains, too far from everybody. When I was using it we had to bring supplies in lorries a whole day's run, and one of the chief reasons why the British didn't can the whole thing sooner was that it was too far away for a brass hat to come and condemn it, and wasn't costing them a cent.

"Well, I refused to name a price, but told this Moustapha Pasha I'd think it over. He got pretty impudent then—tried to tell me that I didn't know my own business, and that as a foreigner I had no right to own land in Egypt that I couldn't use, and so on. So I gave him the gate. I said if he wanted to negotiate on that basis he could do it through the courts, or through his embassy, or whichever way Gyppies do their long-range arguing; and he went off to San Francisco in a huff.

"Within the fortnight, though, he came back with a letter of introduction from Mrs. Aintree, whom I once knew slightly. Its terms were far more affectionate and intimate than she'd any right to use to a practical stranger, and I grew more suspicious than ever.

"I asked him what he thought the land was worth, and he hesitated for about a minute, and then said a hundred pounds. Wasn't that like a Gyppy, to come all that way and then offer five hundred dollars for a thousand acres? I laughed, so he offered a thousand pounds, and then, when I still laughed, five thousand. He had brought the money with him, too, in U. S. yellowbacks.

"But there's something about that Gyppy that stirs all the fight in me. His atmosphere suggests a plastered fake. He seems to think he's talking down to you all the time. I know he's a faker of some kind, and——"

"Well?"

"I want to ditch the brute! Need help!"

By that time we were running into Reno. A man stepped out under a street-lamp and held his hand up.

"Driving without lights," he said. "Excuses don't go. ——! It's Joan Angela! If any one stops you farther along, Miss Joan, just tell 'em I said it's all right!"

"You seem popular," I suggested.

"If they knew your dad, and liked him, and know you're on the level, that's all there is to it," she answered. "I'm going to this hotel."

CHAPTER III

"You talk like the British Government."

THE hotel was full, but the proprietor surrendered his own suite to Joan, and caused two house-maids, two bell-boys, one Chinaman and a darky to sweat furiously. There was nothing whatever to it but friendship—which of course includes respect, or it isn't of the first water by a long way. There were no strings; I saw her bill next morning, and she was charged four dollars fifty for the use of two rooms, supper and breakfast.

After I had found a place to sleep I returned to the hotel for supper. The proprietor came and sat with us while we tackled a scratch feed that his sister threw together in the absence of the cook. For a while the talk was of folk well-known to both of them, and of the ups and downs of local celebrities, all worth recording but not bearing on this tale, unless to show that there is a sort of masonry among old-timers and their sons and daughters that is as a sealed book to all outsiders who aspire to horn in on any other basis than mutual esteem.

You might cheat such people; in fact it might be easy—once. But for all their open-handed kindness, you'd never succeed

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in being one of them until you'd assayed "honest-to-God" before their eyes—after which it wouldn't matter whether you were broke or a billionaire; you'd be on the inside, looking out.

"Anybody staying here named Moustapha Pasha?" Joan Angela asked after a while.

"Yes. M. Pasha. Here a week. The —— thinks he owns the place because he can pay. Tips the bell-hops half a dollar and expects 'em to call him 'excellency' or some such bunk. He's hitched up with a shady gang of lawyers here in town, but I don't know what the game is. Kind o' don't care either, if you asked me."

"Who are the lawyers?"

"Zezwinski and Zoom."

Joan Angela laughed.

"Zezwinski and Zoom wrote me the other day from their San Francisco office suggesting there's a flaw in the title to part of my ranch."

"Is there?" I asked.

"There might have been once," she answered. "An old friend of my dad's named Collins called my attention to it. It didn't mean anything to him, but after we'd talked it over, he gave me a receipt by which he waived forever any claim that he might have to any portion of my ranch. It's in my strong-box. Mr. Collins died, and his estate got into the courts. I daresay Zezwinski and Zoom have been hired by some of the heirs to make all the trouble possible, but I didn't even bother to answer their letter. Suppose you ask Moustapha to come and see me in my room as soon as we're through supper? I'll ask Mr. Ramsden to help interview him."

The proprietor agreed, but hesitated:

"Is Mr. Ramsden a lawyer?" he asked.

"No, merely white. He'll do."

"All right, Miss Leich, that goes with me. I'll tell M. Pasha you'd like to see him."

"And Tom, don't say anything. I don't want it all over town that——"

"Trust me!"

SO, TWENTY minutes later, the door of Joan Angela's sitting-room was opened by a bell-hop, who ushered in Noureddin Moustapha Pasha. The Egyptian's smile vanished almost before the door was closed behind him—the moment, in fact, that he saw me. He had evidently expected a *tête à-tête*.

Neither clothes nor nationality appear to me to matter much, and I'm not quite such a born fool as to expect a foreigner's ideas of right and wrong to agree with mine exactly. You can always make allowance for another fellow's standards, provided he has them and believes in them, just as, for instance, a man who makes cloth by the yard can sell it by the meter if he must. But there are men of all creeds and colors, who can mouth morality like machines printing paper money, but who you know at the first glance have only one rule, and that an automatic, self-adjusting, expanding and collapsing one, that adapts itself to every circumstance and always in the user's favor. This man was clearly one of those.

A handsome man, not very dark-skinned, but looking more like a dark man who had bleached indoors than a pale man who had bronzed a little in the open. He was immaculately dressed in one of those gray tweed suits that they get such an awful price for from the men who want to look like wealthy sports. He had a little black mustache, the thin neck of the city-born Egyptian, a rather prominent nose that came within an ace of being shapely, and bright, dark eyes.

The worst of him to look at was his feet and finger-nails; the first were much too small for his height, and encased in shoes that might not have disgraced a woman, and his finger-nails were polished until they shone with a feminine pinkness.

Another way he had of being objectionable was to assume that he understood you perfectly, and that you and he were on a basis of good fellowship merely because he was willing that such should be the case.

"Ah-ha! Miss Leich," he began. "I thought you would come round to my view-point; but you needn't have come all this way to see me, really. However——"

"What is your view-point?" she asked him blandly.

"That you should sell me that Egyptian property. You have no earthly right to it, you know. Egypt for the Egyptians—that is our motto nowadays."

"And America for any person who cares to come over here and help himself, I suppose?" she retorted.

"You don't suppose I came to this country for nothing, do you?" he asked with a sneer.

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"Nobody ever does," she answered. "They all want something for nothing."

She was enjoying the interview, and as that fact gradually dawned on him all the man's acrid jealousy, that is the underlying secret of Egyptian character, began coming to the surface. He threw diplomacy to the winds, and from that moment bore in mind only one circumstance, as his restless eye betrayed—namely, that I was capable of taking him with one hand and dropping him down the elevator shaft. He and I had exchanged no words, but had no misunderstandings.

"I will make my wants known," he said, "and it makes no difference who hears. The fact is my friend Mrs. Aintree employs the same firm of attorneys——"

"Zezwinski and Zoom?"

"Yes. We have compared notes. We were drawing up articles of incorporation of a small company, to be financed partly in the United States, for the exploitation of that real estate of which you happen to possess the title."

"Sort of forehanded, weren't you!" remarked Joan Angela, hiding a smile behind her hand.

"Remarkably so. It transpired that legal rights could be purchased, which would give the purchaser a claim to that section of your ranch, Miss Leich, on which the most profitable oil-wells have been drilled—'brought in' I believe is the expression. I purchased those rights for cash through Zezwinski and Zoom, who represent the estate of the man who originally owned the rights—an estate now in litigation. My purchase was agreed to by the various litigants, and will be confirmed by the courts of California I don't doubt. So you see, I am no longer in the position of one who invites you to sell your Egyptian land to me. I now come to you and say: Unless you hand me the title to those thousand acres in the Fayoum I will enforce my claim against your California property! You are no longer in a position to please yourself, Miss Leich!"

"Do you think it was sportsmanlike to go behind my back and buy up those rights?" she asked, trying to look serious.

"It was legal," he retorted.

"Do you realize what those rights would be worth, if anything?" she asked him. "D'you mean to tell me you'll trade back a million dollars' worth of rights in California against a thousand acres in the Fayoum? Either you know the rights you have bought behind my back are worthless and you're merely trying to blackmail me, or—and I suppose it's possible—you set a higher value on those one thousand Fayoum acres than you do on all my oil! There's nothing doing, Moustapha Pasha! If you think there's any value to those California rights you've bought, instruct your lawyers and bring suit. I'll fight."

He rose from his chair about as lividly angry as a rattler at a picnic.

"I am not a man accustomed to letting my plans be upset by a——"

"By a woman?" she suggested, seeing he hesitated.

"I shall proceed to enforce my rights."

"Go ahead!" she said, nodding.

He was about to make some acrid answer to that when the telephone rang to announce the arrival of a bevy of Joan Angela's women friends, who had only just heard of her appearance on the scene. She invited them all up to the room, so the Egyptian and I had to make ourselves scarce.

"We will meet again," he said stiffly, bowing himself out.

We were only one flight up, but he refused to walk down-stairs. He would have considered it *infra dig.* However, you don't have to agree with a man on all points before holding him a while in conversation, so I sat down beside him on one of the row of rockers that faced the front window in the lobby.

"Do you know that young woman well?" he asked me.

"I saw her several years ago, for less than half a day," I answered guardedly.

"Oh. So you are not her friend?"

"You'd have to ask her that."

"Her lover perhaps?"

"We're all in love with her. It's a sort of religion, or perhaps a cult, in this part of the world."

"What are you? How do you stand toward her?" he asked, eyeing me sharply sidewise.

"I'm an acquaintance."

I would have kicked the brute for his insolence, if Joan Angela hadn't notified me that she wished to ditch him herself. One doesn't lightly deprive her of her privileges.

"Do you know her well enough to tell her the plain truth?" he asked.

"I know her a lot too well to lie to her," I answered.

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"Tell her this, then, for her own good: In my country I have power as well as wealth; the terms are synonymous in Egypt."

"You need brains over here, if you hope to keep the one or get the other," I answered.

"And it is brains that she will find in opposition to her. I am no fool!" he said suddenly, sitting sharply upright and facing me. "You tell her that! She has to deal with a man who is not accustomed to being refused by women! I tell you, I get my way! I know ropes! When I engage lawyers, they are smart ones, and I make them earn their fees! Do you know Egypt? You have heard of me? Then tell that young woman what you have heard of me! Tell her what happened when an American firm brought suit against me! Perhaps you heard of that too? I could have acquired her Fayoum property without troubling to cross what you call your herring pond. It is only a question of paying lawyers."

It occurred to me to let him ram his conceited head into trouble in his own way, and then, like the devil in Mr. Kipling's poem, I thought of holy charity.

"Suppose you listen to me for one minute," I suggested. "I won't argue, but I'll warn you. When you're dealing with crooks and cowards, it may be the best plan—although I doubt that gravely—to be a crook and a coward too. But as far as concerns Miss Leich, you are dealing with another kind of person altogether. Listen to me, now; don't get impatient. I'm going to pin you in that chair and make you listen if you don't act sensibly. Sit still.

"There's nothing to stop you from getting title to that land in the Fayoum except your own indecency. Miss Leich doesn't want it. She doesn't need money. All she would insist on is a square deal. If you happen to know that that land is very valuable—that there's gold on it, for instance, or oil, or something of that sort—all you need do is to lay your cards face-upward on the table."

"You mean she'd sell?"

"I don't know what she'd do. She'd give you a square deal of some kind."

"All right," he urged. "You get me title to that thousand acres and I'll pay you. Suppose we agree on the amount of the commission now."

"Thanks," I said, "but I'm not in the commission business."

"You want money, don't you?"

"Not at present."

"Well then, what do you want?" he demanded. "What is your motive in buttonholing me, if you don't want to do business?"

"I'm doing my best," I said, "to resist a temptation to thrash you. I'm taking pity on you, if you'd only realize it."

"You talk of thrashing me and of taking pity in the same breath! You talk like the British Government! However, I believe I did not invite you to sit next to me."

Like Dulcy in the drama, I counted ten. It works occasionally. Then:

"It's a matter of common hospitality," I said. "You're a stranger in a strange land, and I'm warning you. If you've business to do, you can do it, but you'll have to do it straight or you'll suffer; for it simply happens that you've picked on a woman, who belongs to a crowd that is honest. And they're so honest that they'll smash you all to pieces if they catch you playing under the table."

"Such hypocrites, I suppose you mean!" he answered, getting out of his chair.

And at that he walked away with a sneer as perfect as a Tom cat's that gives elbow-room, but no more, to an Airedale terrier.

CHAPTER IV

"Zoom of the Zee-bar-Zee."

I MET Mr. Zoom of Zezwinski and Zoom the next morning on my way to breakfast; he was taking the air with a half-dozen dogs. He believes in keeping himself before the public eye, does Ollie Zoom—enjoys a reputation for giving two-dollar bills to hoboes, provided that some one is looking, and rather poses as the man behind the legislature—a pose that costs him a lot less than running for office. In fact, he cultivates an atmosphere of influence based on clandestine information, and walks to the office in golf stockings to show what a democrat he can be in spite of everything.

Ollie Zoom likes nothing better than to be accosted by a stranger in the street. It gives him a chance to get off some real, free, genuine Western stuff rather suggestive of a five-cent chromo of the Grand Cañon, or, if you prefer the simile, of a chain-store Camembert cheese, all smell and no flavor. He liked immensely to have me admire his

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German police-dogs, and told me all about their pedigrees, what they had cost to import, and which prizes he proposed to win with them. They were a melancholy looking lot of brutes that lacked nothing so much as an honest job of work, but I flattered Zoom unrighteously about them and he grew chesty. When he learned that I was recently from New York he became at once a Colonel Cody in his own imagination. He had asked me pointblank where I came from, which no genuine Westerner would ever do.

"Ah! New York—that's where you see the best dogs, of course, and the best of everything that money can buy. But you can't buy life; that's what I always say, you can't buy life. Out here there's life and lots of it. We're not effete; we're free and easy; there's room to turn around in. What were you thinking of doing out here?"

I answered with one of those true statements of fact that act like bait in a wolf-trap.

"I represent an Eastern capitalist."

The wolf walked straight in.

"Got any connections here?" he asked sharply, suddenly.

"No."

"Well, say—you've come to the right city and met the right man! I'm Zoom of Zezwinski and Zoom—the Zee-bar-Zee, as the boys all call us. Here's my card; suppose you come and see me at my office; at that corner, first flight up where you see that long row of big windows. Light, my boy! That's my medicine. Let there be light! Who d'you represent?"

"The god of good appetites," I answered. "I'm on my way to breakfast."

"Hah! Nothing like this climate for making you hungry, eh? Punish a meal and then see me at nine-thirty? Suit you all right? I'll make a point of being there. There's nothing between the Coast and Utah I can't tell you all about. See you later, then."

He went one way and I the other, but I stopped on the stone bridge that crosses the Truckee River and pretended to watch the water, for the fun of seeing him stand and pretend to fool with his dogs in order to watch me. It was just as well I did that, because Joan Angela came out on the hotel steps, and if I had walked straight along he would have seen me talking to her; but he proved least patient of the two, and I remained on the bridge until he turned a corner.

Joan Angela is one of those women who are good to see at eight in the morning. Lots of them look lovely by eleven o'clock, and of course, in the afternoon and at night they are all adorable. But Joan comes out as if the dew were on her, and is wide awake and full of laughter from the start—hungry in the bargain!

She hurried me in to breakfast with the wife of the man who keeps the hotel cigar-stand, and we three had a table in a corner to ourselves. Joan Angela resumed an argument over the ham and eggs.

"You see, dear," she said, "if you keep on being angry, when your husband comes you'll make him angry too. Sam doesn't stop to think. He'll just use his gun and there'll be trouble. I know Sam's popular and so are you; and of course any jury around here would bring it in an accident, or self-defense, but what's the use?"

"He *ought* to be shot! He's no better than a coyote!"

"Exactly. Then give him the range," advised Joan Angela. "The law is off coyotes. He'll fall foul of some one whose business it is to go after his kind."

"But think of the brute's impudence!"

She was a pretty little woman, but her eyes were blazing hard and her forehead was all netted up with angry wrinkles.

"Why should you of all people take the part of such a reptile? What is he anyway? Some kind of prince? Does he think that any woman over here, just because she happens to be running her husband's shop while he's away, will be tickled to death to——"

"Never you mind," laughed Joan Angela. "I've had lots and lots of that kind of proposal! He comes from Egypt, where they think that any woman who shows herself in public is doing it to attract them. They don't know any better."

"He'll learn as soon as Sam gets back!"

"Sam need never know. Why, those Egyptian pashas used to get introductions to me and make me the most amazing offers. It's really funny if you stop to think. There was one of them, a big, fat man like a Turk with a bulbous nose, who swore he'd turn Bolshevist and upset the world if I wouldn't be his fourth wife. I told him he'd better be a Bolshevist than nothing. I called him Mafeesh Pasha—*mafeesh* means 'nothing' in

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their language. The nickname stuck, and ruined all his political chances forever."

"This brute didn't even offer to make me his fourth wife," said Sam's sole partner, beginning to smile at last. "I could have treated that as a joke, but——"

"It is a joke. His very name is a joke. Moustapha! It suggests a sort of sly tomcat with stage whiskers. He's not worth getting Sam in trouble over. Would you have Sam get a rep for shooting tomcats?"

"Speaking of cats," I said, "I was talking with Zoom, of the Zee-bar-Zee, just now. Got a date with him at half-past nine. Are you quite sure about that title to your oil ranch?"

"Absolutely," said Joan Angela, looking straight and frank at me with level brows. She comes of a crowd not given to deceiving either themselves or other people.

So I kept that appointment with Zoom after breakfast, and was ushered into an office hung with pictures of the West intended to convey the impression that Mr. Zoom held options on it all. There were pictures of Mr. Zoom standing in the foreground of vast oil-well areas, and of Mr. Zoom inspecting mining properties. And on Mr. Ollie Zoom's great flat mahogany desk there were samples of ore that would make your mouth water, if you didn't know how easily such things can be obtained.

Mr. Zoom produced cigars and turned his chair so as to have the light behind him, crossing one knee over the other with a sort of "make yourself at home and let's talk intimately" gesture. He had good control of his face; his expression suggested no more than friendly interest, but the corners of his mouth would have undeceived a widow with insurance money to invest—or so you'd think.

"Now, what are you interested in?" he asked me.

I like to stick to the unvarnished truth; but you don't have to tell all the truth in order to retain your self-respect.

"Just at the moment I have oil in mind, and not in this state but in California," I answered.

"Couldn't be better! Couldn't be better! My partner Zezwinski runs the San Francisco office. Between you and I and these four walls, a better business head than Zezwinski's simply ain't, that's all. Had you any particular property in mind?"

"Yes."

"Come on now; let's have the cards on the table," said Zoom, rubbing his hands together. "We know all the decent prospects in California—every one of them. Name your district, and I'll reel you off what's there!"

"Do you know a place called Arcady?"

"Do I! Eighty-eight miles from Sacramento as the crow flies. Miss Leich's place; that's all of it. No good as a ranch, but they've brought in oil. That girl has millions—'has' was the word I used. Getting and keeping are not always the same thing."

"Do you know anything about the title to her property?" I asked him.

"Ah! So *that's* the lay of the land, is it? Well, you're too late, my friend. There's a flaw in her title—a big, wide-open flaw that means she's going to lose a long slice down the middle—about one-eighth of the property, seven-eighths of the oil, or so say men who ought to know. But there's been a man ahead of you, who bought the claim to the title through our San Francisco office. Who d'you represent? If your man has money there still might be something doing. Money talks, you know."

"The man I represent has ample means for anything he sets his mind on," I assured him.

"Um-m-m!" said Zoom. "If you tell me who you represent, so there's a basis of confidence between you and I, so to speak—why, there's no knowing but I might give you the right steer on this proposition. Come on, now—who's your man? My name's Zoom; everybody knows me. I ain't no secret!"

But neither is Meldrum Strange a secret. If I were to mention the name of Meldrum Strange all hope of worming information out of this man would be gone that instant.

"No," I said, "if you've something you think you can sell me, shoot."

He hesitated, but only for a moment. The chance to add more tricks to an already tricky business was too tempting to let pass.

"Well, between ourselves then. This thing's a wee mite complicated. An Egyptian—he's a prince or a duke or a count or something—calls himself a pasha—yes, that's it, a pasha—has bought those rights from the Collins heirs. He paid a pretty stiff price. We warned him he was buying a lawsuit, but I don't think there's much doubt he can win, and he has already started

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to form a corporation here in Nevada, to be a sort of holding company for whatever can be won from the Leich estate and some lands in Egypt as well. Miss Leich happens to own both properties, and between you and I, I rather think he knows what he's doing. I'm on the board of directors of his new company—or shall be when we incorporate, and Ollie Zoom don't lend his name to anything in the nature of an unfilled flush, believe me! Life's too short for taking chances."

"What's the use of telling me all this?" I asked him. "If you've got a good thing you naturally won't part with it."

"On terms, my boy, on terms. I'll always take a profit when I see one. If your man has money enough to buy me out, I'll sell."

"So you yourself have put money into this?"

"Well hardly; not exactly. My partner and I have put our time and knowledge into it, and that's worth money. We took a share instead of charging him a cash fee. For one thing he balked at the size of our fee, which is a way these foreigners have; they'll pay any price at all for something they can look at, but when it comes to shelling out for service rendered and for legal skill and advice and so on, they yell murder. For another thing, he wants some honest-to-God Americans on the board—folk like Zezwinski and I who have influence behind the scenes at Washington. Now if your man had influence with the State Department this proposition would be his meat. D'you suppose he's fixed so he could make his pull felt in that quarter?"

I nodded.

"You see, the idea is this: This is one of those cases that are best settled out of court, and between you and I, that's what's going to happen. The Leich girl's a fighter from the word go; but I know what I'm talking about. She'll settle, for she's going to get the right advice. Of course, she can lose the best part of her property if she'd rather have the lawsuit; but we're going to offer to take over her whole estate and give her stock and bonds in exchange. In that way she'll be much better off. We'll be more than fair, we'll be generous. The offer we expect to make will cut her actual loss in half if she accepts it. And once we're in possession of all that oil, with our own private pipe-line to the Coast, you can easily see how a combination with two or three other companies would build us into a concern that Washington would have to take mighty seriously. Get me?"

"But what about the Egyptian end of it?"

"That is the crux of the whole business! The value of that Egyptian property is something fabulous! Of course, it might turn out to be a mare's nest, as anything may in this world, but we'll make enough money from the oil to take care of that, and plenty over! The terms will include the surrender to the company of that real estate in Egypt, and the point is this—that under the laws of Egypt, as I understand it, it's pretty near impossible for an Egyptian to do anything; it's mighty close to being impossible for any one to do anything unless he's a British subject, with considerable pull at that. But if a strong United States corporation were to take hold of the project with the backing of the U. S. Government behind the scenes, and perhaps a little newspaper publicity to keep the politicians nervous, the British would have to sit back and look on. You get me?"

"More or less. But it doesn't seem to me that you've got that Egyptian property yet," I said, "and you haven't as much as suggested why it should be worth as much as you seem to suppose."

"Well, see here," said Zoom, "I've told you enough to give you an inkling. If you want to know any more, you come across with the name of the man you represent."

"Not yet," I answered. "But I'll tell you this—he's one of the richest capitalists in the U. S. A."

"Do you think from what I've told you that he'll look into it?"

"I'm inclined to think that he will," I answered truthfully, having already made up my mind that Grim, Ramsden and Ross were going to investigate this whole affair to the bottom. "What makes this Egyptian property so valuable?"

"Ah! Now you're asking! Isn't the oil end of the business enough to begin with? If you'll come back this afternoon I'll show you a map of that property, location of the wells and exact figures. Meanwhile, I'll have a talk with the pasha and we'll have an offer ready to send to your man—I take it he's not afraid to talk six figures, is he? And if he likes the look of that and cares to introduce himself, we'll throw in the Egyptian end by way of bonus—see? We'll go

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into details about Egypt after he has satisfied himself regarding oil. That suit you?"

Nothing would have suited me better than to learn the secret there and then of that thousand acre piece of sand, with its one well and its ruinous, deserted wooden camp. Obviously there was something under those Egyptian acres to send an already wealthy pasha to the States scheming in partnership with Zoom, whose local reputation was for overshrewdness that lost him all the honorable business in two states, but had made him a fortune of sorts for all that. Zoom probably knew what he was doing.

So I made an appointment for that afternoon, and hurried back to the hotel to see Joan Angela.

"What do you know of your manager at Arcady?" I asked her.

"All there is to know. Why?"

"Is he in debt, or anything like that?"

"If he needed money he would only have to ask me for it."

"He might not care to ask you."

"Jeff Ramsden, sit down there, come out from behind that mask, and tell me exactly what you mean! If there's anything the matter with Will Tryon I'm going to know it."

"That man Zoom told me just now that some one is going to advise you to accept a rotten offer for your property," I said. "It must be somebody who's in your confidence. Who else has any say in your affairs?"

"Will Tryon is the only man who knows my business."

"How about a woman? I notice you look startled. What woman knows all about your affairs?"

"But that's impossible! Clara Mulready is as honest as the day is long. It's true she knows everything, and I talk ideas over with her and all that. But Clara—why she's true as steel."

"Are you in the habit of taking her advice?"

"Sometimes. She often gives me good advice."

"Has she any money of her own?"

"No. None to speak of."

"How do she and your manager get along?"

"I think Will Tryon hates her. Will is one of those crotchety old-timers who can't believe a woman has more than one possible sphere. He swears I'm the only exception to that whom he ever knew."

"And Clara Mulready lives on the ranch? What is she—Miss or Mrs.?"

"Mrs. She's a widow."

"Any man in the offing?"

"Yes. There's a rather bright young fellow named Jansen. Will Tryon gave him a job on the ranch, and thinks quite a lot of him. He's a year or two younger than Clara, but I think it's only a question of time and enough money before she marries him."

"So Jansen has no money either. Clara listens to Jansen, and would like him to have money. Clara has your ear. Do either of those two people know about the receipt you got from old man Collins that establishes your title to the ranch?"

"Clara does."

"Has she access to your strong-box?"

"No."

"Who else has, besides yourself?"

"Only Will Tryon, and only he when I give him the key and a special letter each time."

"Where is the strong-box?"

"In the bank at Sacramento."

"Has Clara Mulready ever been with you when you went to open the box?"

"Oh, often."

"When was the last occasion?"

"Three or four days before I came away. It's a big box, and much too full; so I took her along to help me straighten out all the papers."

"Did you see the receipt from Collins on that occasion?"

"Certainly did. Showed it to Clara. There's a little room at the bank for the use of depositors. I decided to hire a second box, so we had both boxes put in that room and divided the papers into them. She packed one box, and I the other."

"Who put away that Collins receipt, you or she?"

"She did."

"She didn't bring it away with her by any chance?"

"No."

"What makes you so sure of that?"

"I saw her stick it in an envelope, and saw her lay another envelope on top of it. She called my attention to it at the time, because the envelope that she laid on top was one that Will Tryon was likely to want before long."

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"What was he going to want it for?"

"It's the title deed to a little scrap of land in San Francisco that's as good as sold. We gave a man an option on it. In fact, I had half a mind to bring the deed away with me, so that Will Tryon could take it to the lawyers when he goes to San Francisco. Then I remembered that Will's fussy about carrying valuable papers in his pocket, or even keeping them in the office safe any longer than he must; and he has to go to Sacramento anyhow on the way to Frisco; so I left it in the box."

"Was the envelope sealed?"

"It wasn't. Clara sealed it, and wrote on it in blue pencil what it contained."

"I suppose so that Will Tryon would take it away without troubling to examine the contents?"

"The idea was to save him time. Will's generally in a hurry."

"Now tell me some more about young Jansen. Does Will Tryon trust him much?"

"I think so. He doesn't trust anybody more than he can help. Will is one of those faithful fellows who accept responsibility for everything that goes wrong. Heaven knows how he finds time to do all the things himself that he does do. Now and then he has to trust Jansen."

"Does he ever send Jansen to San Francisco?"

"Oh, yes. That's part of Fritz's business, to run errands. But what are you driving at?"

"The question is—shall we drive or go by train?"

"Where?"

"To your ranch. I propose we give Moustapha Pasha the range for a while, as you suggested at breakfast-time. Are you expected at the ranch?"

"Not for several days."

"Good. I'll telephone to Zoom and call off my appointment for this afternoon. Which is it to be, Joan Angela—train or auto?"

"I've turned that Ford over to the man you hired yours from. Go and buy a decent car for me. I think you're crazy."

So I laid out close to five thousand dollars of Joan Angela's money, and almost within the hour we were scooting along the concrete pike toward Carson at a speed distinctly higher than they recommend for brand-new cars of any make.

CHAPTER V

Zezwinski of the Zee-bar-Zee.

IT WAS characteristic of the woman that all that long way Joan Angela never referred to the problem that was taking us in such a hurry back to Arcady. She talked incessantly, telling story on story of the men her father had lived and made his fortune among, but her own affairs seemed entirely out of mind. It was not, I think, that she was counting on me to unravel the problem for her. She has inherited the gift of facing each mile as she reaches it, which I believe was the secret of the conquest of those mountains that we drove among.

If my guess is correct, she had detected instantly the weak link in her line of defences when I asked her those questions before we came away. She probably saw it more clearly than I did, and faced the situation like a flash. But she has that priceless quality of, once having faced it, neither letting up nor worrying until she has met the emergency and conquered it. That is the true spirit of conquest, embodying the said-to-be unladylike, but surely God-made quality described for lack of a plainer term as "guts."

Among such folk as happen to be worth the salt they eat, about the only arrow of outrageous fortune that can really sting is betrayal by one's friends. All else is endurable. Loss means nothing much, provided your real intimates stand by and let you keep your faith in them. Betrayal by mere outsiders hardly comes within the word's real meaning, since the most that an outsider ever did was to take advantage of a momentary lack of watchfulness—annoying, if you like, and mean, of course; but to be expected, and your own fault if you let it happen.

But you've a right—you may say you've a duty to trust the inner guard, as old Confucius knew when he advised the world to look the other way if its neighbor is walking in the melon-patch. And Joan Angela is of the loyal kind whose friends can only lose her friendship in one way. It seemed more than possible that somebody at Arcady had taken that one way, and she might have been excused for nervousness; yet she gave no sign that I could detect of the slightest lack of ease.

We rolled into Arcady long after dark—

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a dusty, undetermined sort of village, that hardly seemed to know yet whether its destiny was township or collapse. There were ancient trees in haphazard disorder, and young eucalyptus set out in rows like armies getting ready for the great advance; old houses built of bone-dry wood, and new ones cut to order out of lumber that still oozed resin; well-gear everywhere, whichever way you looked—pump-beams rocking endlessly with the intense air of concentration of animals burrowing; and of course the smell. They say that's good for you. Maybe. Anything is good for you that keeps your spirits up.

The old ranch-house was a wonder of a place, set far back from the oil-wells in a fold between two spurs of the hills behind, at the head of the valley, and surrounded by very ancient trees. It had been built in the days when strength meant weight and thickness, and added to by some one who understood that right proportion is the secret of design. There seemed to be absolutely nothing whatever the matter with it, except that it stood so far away from anywhere, and all too close to that stinking outpour from earth's sore wounds.

It more nearly resembled the house that Cecil Rhodes built at Groote Schuur than any other I have seen—a comfortable, unpretending, dignified and decent mansion with an air of peace all over it—nothing left undone to make it worthy to be lived in and to look at; nothing overdone.

And the first encounter with its occupants was equally reassuring. The Chinese butler must have been a direct descendant of Confucius, for he had all the virtues, including a tolerant smile and an air of not expecting too much from other folk as mortal as himself. Mrs. Clara Mulready was a rather pretty little woman, who looked younger than she was and seemed unqualifiedly pleased—even as pleased as the Chinaman—to see Joan Angela again so unexpectedly. The other servants, who were all Chinese—and there were three of them—did Wan Li's bidding at a sort of automatic trot, like a miniature Gilbert and Sullivan chorus.

Mrs. Clara Mulready looked rather a cuddlesome, caressing sort of little person, with blue eyes and a decided pride of leg that she adorned with expensive stockings. She had a wealth of rather pale hair done up painstakingly, and dimples in both cheeks that danced when she laughed. On the whole, the most remarkable thing about her was that Joan Angela should choose her for an intimate, for the two seemed as the poles apart. Clara Mulready struck me as not exactly stupid but something like a kitten on the hearth-rug, too wise to go mousing as long as cream was served her on a plate.

Will Tryon came up to the house to dinner, bringing young Jansen with him. Will Tryon stood up square and gray-eyed, looked a stranger in the face, and cared for neither —— nor houris as long as the day's work was done and tomorrow's lay mapped out. He had a hard-lined face with a suggestion of the Indian's stoicism at the corners of the mouth and eyes—a rather homely face, but honest to the end of time, and his hollow back and shoulders and loose loins were those of a man, if ever I saw one.

Jansen was something different—a rather fair-haired Scandinavian sort, very quick indeed with his agreeable remarks, and a trifle ostentatiously respectful—built lightly, rather nervous on his feet, alert, and cut out more for figuring, I should say, or ferreting, than for managing a big concern. You see his sort around legations, doing the detail work and keeping tabs on other folk rather than constructing anything. He wouldn't have made an honest fortune in a million years, I was sure of that, and I wondered what Tryon saw in him; yet Tryon seemed to treat him with considerable friendliness, and Tryon is hardly the man to trust business in a mere human ferret's hands.

They were probably all wondering what might have brought Joan Angela back so unexpectedly, but nobody asked questions. Will Tryon talked with her about the oil developments, and Fritz Jansen flirted half-mischievously with Clara Mulready all through dinner; I wouldn't have given ten cents for her chance of catching him, supposing that were what she really wanted, nor one cent for her judgment if she did. He had his eye on the main chance, that fellow, but I was puzzled about her.

She had one sure virtue that partly explained Joan Angela's affection for her, although only partly, because nothing you can do for Joan makes any difference; she likes you or she doesn't. It was Clara who made music after dinner—Chopin, on

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the Steinway Grand—while we three sat around the great hearth drinking the divine stuff in. The only fault I find with all outdoors is that its music isn't tameable, as rocks and forest and rivers are; the only good I see in town life is the music you can spread out like a feast of the gods within four walls. It always seems to me that if Judas Iscariot had owned a parlor grand, and used it, the world would have not slipped backward twenty centuries.

I got no chance to talk with Will Tryon—had in fact no inclination to do anything but listen—until Joan Angela and Clara went off to bed and left us three before the low wood fire. Very shortly after that Fritz Jansen pulled out, making some excuse about early rising, but Tryon stayed on to act the part of host.

We talked about wind in the trees for a while, for the music had drawn that vein uppermost, but I had to broach business somehow, so at last I drove at him bow-on, for he isn't the sort of man who likes suggestions and evasiveness.

"How soon were you thinking of going to Frisco?" I asked him, and he looked up suddenly and stared hard.

"When I'm ready. Why?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. Could you go tomorrow?"

"I could, yes. If it was Joan's business I could start to-night."

"It is her business."

"I'm listening," he answered quietly.

"Have you in mind to sell a small piece of real estate in the city?"

"Yes. It's sold."

"You have to deliver the title deed?"

"I thought of sending Jansen."

"Did he ask to go?"

"Yes. He has private business there."

"Joan Angela told me this morning that only you and she ever have access to her strong-box in Sacramento."

"She's most always truthful."

"Then either you or she would go to Sacramento in that case, to get the title deed out of the box."

"I figured on going. There's other things to see to at the bank."

"You would take the deed out of the box, give it to Jansen, and send him to San Francisco with it?"

"That's right. Joan seems to have been gossiping. She's quiet about business as a rule."

"There's a scheme on foot to rob her, and I suspect the idea is to make you an innocent accomplice."

"Innocent is good."

"To whom is that title deed to be delivered?"

"John Doe. The lawyers who did the business are Zezwinski and Zoom, known all over the West as the Zee-bar-Zee outfit. They're skunks."

"Do you think you could have Zezwinski come here himself and get that deed?"

"I don't know. Maybe. Why?"

"I'd like to catch Zezwinski."

"That would suit me. He skinned Joan once, when she was away in Egypt. What is the idea this time?"

"I don't know positively. I only know a corporation is already being formed in Nevada as a holding company for this estate and Joan Angela's land in Egypt."

"Say, that's interesting! Who's the hopeful incorporator?"

"A man named Noureddin Moustapha Pasha, an Egyptian of more or less Armenian ancestry. The plan is apparently this: Inside that envelope containing the title deed to the piece of real estate in San Francisco that you have just sold, I think will be found the receipt that the late Mr. Collins gave to Joan Angela. You know the receipt I mean?"

"I sure do. That's what cinches her title to this ranch. Who put it in that envelope?"

"Neither you, nor she, nor I at any rate."

"Um-m-m! I get you."

"The envelope is sealed. I know that. It's all ready on top of everything in the box, with the contents written in blue pencil on the outside. You might be able to recognize the handwriting."

He nodded. His mouth had set hard long ago, and he was listening to me with his granite-like jaw resting on one fist.

"You get the idea? You would take that envelope from the box and send it by Jansen straight to Zezwinski without opening it. I've been thinking that perhaps it might be better if you were to ask Zezwinski to come here and get the title deed himself."

"He'd smell a rat," said Tryon.

"Can you think of a better idea?"

"Maybe not. I'll go to Sacramento in the morning. I'll take a car at dawn, and get there when the bank opens. Fritz Jansen shall come with me. I'll let him

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see me take that envelope out of the box and put it in my pocket. Then I'll go in and see the bank manager; and when I come out of there I'll tell Fritz there's been a phone message from the ranch and we're both needed. I'll have him call up Zezwinski, and if it's true that Fritz mixed up in this it's a safe bet he'll persuade Zezwinski to come at once before I open that envelope. Then we'll have Zezwinski, and whoever else has had a hand in the business, backed up proper. I hope you're wrong, but if you're right I'll thank you. Good night, Mr. Ramsden."

I WAS up with the birds, just in time to catch sight of Will Tryon's car departing in a cloud of dust, with young Jansen in the rear seat. Evidently Tryon was in no mood for conversation with anybody, and he had left it to me to explain the plan of operations to Joan Angela, which I had no opportunity to do for several hours, because Clara Mulready was in her most clinging mood that morning and not to be shaken off by any means.

We spent most of the day riding about the ranch, and I had to watch my opportunity to tell her about Tryon's arrangements. Thereafter she behaved toward Clara Mulready exactly as usual.

Tryon returned about four o'clock, and gave Jansen plenty to do at once to keep him occupied; but I detected one exchange of signals between Fritz and Clara as he passed the porch. She raised her eyebrows, and he nodded; that was all.

Zezwinski arrived in a great yellow battle-wagon of a car about an hour before dinner-time, bragging of the speed he had made, and trying to turn the boasting into flattery.

"A chance to see Miss Leich in her home, you know—a tortoise would have broken records!"

There was somewhere near two hundred pounds of him, all shark. He had a great, indecent nose, too broad at the lower end and much too narrow at the top, brown crocodilian eyes with heavy lids, and a mouth that was all lips—flappy, mobile lips that would have earned his fortune as a maker of grimaces on the stage. It was a big, powerful head on a strong neck, and his shoulders too were powerful, but he was in poor condition, as the size of his stomach testified. His manner, like his partner Zoom's, was that of a man who has adopted the West without being adapted to it, free enough, and easy enough, but deliberately built up from the surface instead of naturally growing outward from a core of manliness.

"Let's get the business over first," Joan Angela suggested, and he was more than agreeable.

"That's right, Miss Leich. Never let business interfere with pleasure; get it out of the way and done with! That's my motto always. It ought to be a simple little matter. If you've that title deed, I've got my check-book. My clerks will attend to registering the transfer."

We all went into the library—Joan Angela, Will Tryon, Clara Mulready, Fritz Jansen, Zezwinski and I. Zezwinski rather wondered at that, and hadn't manners enough not to comment on it.

"Business quite a family affair, isn't it? Well, the more witnesses the better to a straight transaction."

It is an enormous library. There is a fireplace built of green Barstow granite, and in front of that, in the middle of the room, a large rectangular table that used to belong to Marie Antoinette, or some such extravagant patron of the fine arts. The evenings weren't in the least chilly in that neck of the valley, but the room was big, the windows were open, and a fire looked cheerful, so the Chinaman had started a blaze. We all sat down—Joan Angela at one end of the table, Zezwinski at the other, facing her, Will Tryon on Joan Angela's right, and Jansen facing him, with his back to the fire. Clara Mulready took one armchair near the fireplace, and I the one opposite, for in theory at any rate I had nothing to do with the business, and had no excuse for approaching the table. I thought that Clara Mulready's face betrayed signs of nervousness, but Jansen seemed perfectly at ease.

The business didn't take long.

"There's the deed," said Will Tryon, and tossed a long envelope on to the table. Zezwinski produced his fountain pen and began to write a check. I could see the big envelope easily from where I sat. But Clara could not see it, and Jansen's eyes were on the writing of the check. Will Tryon's face was an enigma—passive—the face of a man who has drawn three cards to a pair and has raised the bet.

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"Better look and see if the deed's all right," he suggested.

Zezwinski reached for the envelope and tore it open. Then he peered down into it, and pulled out the deed with two fingers, using his thumb, or so it seemed to me, to push another paper back into the envelope.

"Yes," he said, glancing at the deed, "that seems to be in order. You've indorsed it in blank."

He pushed the check toward Tryon and slipped the deed into his pocket, then crumpled up the envelope very casually.

"No waste-basket? Well, the fire will do."

He stood up to make sure of his aim, and threw the crumpled ball of paper well to the back of the burning sticks, where it caught instantly. I jumped for the poker, and burned my hand trying to grab the envelope before it was consumed entirely. Joan Angela jumped up, but sat down again at a nod from Will Tryon.

"That's all right," said Tryon. "What d'you think you've burned?" he asked, looking straight at Zezwinski.

"Why—my dear man—burned an envelope—you saw me."

"Yes. I was looking to see you do it. Young Jansen here phoned you this morning, didn't he?"

"He did."

"He used a desk phone in the bank in Sacramento. I was at the switchboard in a back room, listening in. This morning that deed was in another envelope. I changed it. The handwriting on the one you've burned was mine. Inside it, signature upward, there was another piece of paper, wasn't there? You caught sight of the name Collins. That was my handwriting too. Here's the real receipt that Collins gave to Miss Leich to establish her clear title to this ranch."

Will Tryon drew a sheet of foolscap from his inner pocket and displayed it. It was good poker—Joan Angela's pot. Fritz Jansen's face was ashen-gray, and his fingers below the table opened and closed convulsively. Clara Mulready's face was as white as the dress she was wearing. Joan Angela looked utterly sorry. Will Tryon's look was stern. The only man who showed no particular emotion was Zezwinski.

"Well? What are you going to do about it?" he demanded.

"We'll give you your dinner in the kitchen with the Chinamen," Joan Angela answered. Then she glanced at Clara Mulready, wondering. "Clara, dear, will you come with me into the next room?"

Zezwinski got up to go, shrugging his shoulders with a cynicism that I don't think was assumed. He was a shark who had missed his fish, that was all, ready to forget that one and pursue the next.

"Sit down!" commanded Tryon. His voice was like two cracks of a whip, and Zezwinski obeyed.

"Jansen! Get out of here! Get out of California! You've one hour by my watch to hit the trail! Take one of our light trucks and a man to drive. You may burn our gas for a hundred miles, and send the car back—any direction you see fit. But don't cross my path or Miss Angela's again! That's all. Beat it!"

Jansen left the room with a sheepish sort of washed-out grin on his face.

Zezwinski rose from his chair again and started to follow him.

"I said, sit down!"

Zezwinski glanced at me and then at Tryon, and obeyed. Either of us could have managed him with one hand.

"Now, what's at the bottom of this? Out with the whole story!"

"I've no remarks to make," Zezwinski answered, pursing up his mouth.

"I didn't call for no remarks from you," said Tryon. "What I'm going to have is facts."

"Facts, eh?"

"You heard me right."

"Well, I'm no poor sport," said Zezwinski, leaning back and thrusting both hands deep into his pockets. "You're talking through your hat, you know. You can't prove anything. I can afford to be generous. What do you want to know? The property belongs to Miss Leich as long as you've that Collins receipt to put in evidence; that's legal advice for which I'll charge you nothing. It's free *gratis*. What else?"

"Any fool knows why you wanted this place, and why you can't get it," Tryon answered. "What for did you want that Egyptian property?"

"Oh, that's nothing to do with me. That's a side-issue."

"No use lying. Ramsden here has had a talk with Zoom. Facts now! What for did you want that Egyptian property?"

"Didn't Zoom tell you?"

"Zoom's not here. You out with it!"

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"I'd nothing to do with that part; don't take much stock in it either; sounds like a mare's nest to me. A client of ours happened to want it. He was so anxious to be in a strong position to bargain with Miss Leich that he paid a stiff figure for the Collins heirs' claim against this ranch. The idea of a holding company for both properties grew out of that. The Egyptian land is said to be valuable, but I've no proof of it."

"In what way valuable?"

"There's some talk about a tomb—a king's tomb I guess he said. I don't remember the king's name. My opinion is he kids himself."

"There's a nigger in this woodpile yet," said Tryon. "What I'm going to know from you before you leave this room is, who corrupted Mrs. Mulready and Fritz Jansen? Who put you up to it, and put them up to it, and linked the lot together? That's what I'm driving at."

"Privilege!" Zezwinski answered. "You can't expect me to divulge a confidence."

"Confidence? You don't know what that is! D'you know what to expect if you don't answer? You won't rob nobody for quite a while if your discretion isn't working good."

Zezwinski didn't care ten cents about divulging confidences. What rattled him was being forced to do it. Being a born bully, he hated his own medicine and he was no such fool as to doubt that Tryon would make good whatever he threatened.

"If you had asked me civilly, as one man to another—" he began.

"I'll give you sixty seconds!" Tryon interrupted, pulling out his watch.

"Oh, well—Mrs. Isobel Aintree is the name."

"Her address?" demanded Tryon.

"All right," I said. "I know her address. So does Joan Angela."

"Go and eat with the Chinamen!" commanded Tryon, opening the door and standing back to let Zezwinski through.

CHAPTER VI

"A land in which death is not difficult, but life has its complexities."

HIGH up behind Joan Angela's home, reached by a winding track that in places is barely practicable for a horse, there rises a promontory from which you can get a view of all that countryside. Once on top, you find a level forty acres and about thirty sugar-pines irregularly spaced, great, splendid fellows three feet thick that rise as straight as arrows for fifty or sixty feet before throwing a branch.

On the morning after Zezwinski's defeat we turned the horses loose up there to nibble and play the goat, and Joan Angela, Will Tryon and I made a picnic breakfast, which is to other breakfasts as a full moon is to a whale-oil lamp; there's no comparing them.

Below us the whole ranch lay divided into a geometrical pattern by the ugly well-rigs and the clusters of made-to-order bungalows that housed the gangs. It was a strange view on the whole—pretty typical of the birth-throes by which new orders come into being, and I daresay beautiful if you have an eye for interpretation.

Joan Angela was silent. We had seen nothing of Clara Mulready since she followed Joan out of the library the day before, and although personally I wouldn't have trusted her in the first place, or have worried about her in the second—and I knew Will Tyron agreed with me—with Joan it was another matter. Neither of us knew what to say to console her, and man-fashion I supposed that scorn of some one else might help.

"I'd have thought better of Zezwinski if he's accepted that offer of a meal among the Chinamen," I said. "He stalked out of the house as if we were the devils and he an angel with his feathers pulled. I'm all in favor of finishing the brute, if we can manage it."

But she could see nothing worth finishing about Zezwinski.

"He was never a friend of mine, and I never trusted him," she answered. "It was all my fault. I shouldn't have trusted Clara. I knew she was inclined to be sly in some ways, but I thought that would thaw out of her in time. I guess she was tempted too far. We've got no right to leave temptation in people's way. Left to herself I think she would have resisted it, but she met that Mrs. Aintree. Mrs. Aintree had been at the ranch quite often when I was away—six or seven times during the past month. And Clara was so fond of the comfort that money brings that she was willing to lend herself to that meanness—think of it! What is the matter with you

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and me, Will? You always mistrusted Clara; you never said so, but I knew you did and I resented it. I never thought an awful lot of Fritz, and you didn't like my doubting your judgment. Now you feel as mean about Fritz as I do about Clara. What is the answer?"

"Lord knows!" said Will. "But I know when I'm through with a man, and it don't take him long to discover it either."

That was evidently meant for a dig at Joan, and it drew the first laugh from her that morning. Perhaps that was what he had intended, for he smiled back; but a second later he was frowning again.

"I see she's coming up here," he said discontentedly. "There's no way of giving her the slip, ——!"

Clara came looking her prettiest, riding one of Joan's bay Arab ponies, smiling through her tears, but dressed to kill in a glove-fitting gray riding-suit. She let the pony go, and came and flung herself beside Joan Angela, face-downward, and then presently looked up with her chin resting on both hands. My guess was that she had thought out that pose in advance, but perhaps I was wrong, for prejudice warps my judgment as surely as sun on the foresight spoils my aim. I started to move away and so did Will, but Joan shook her head, and we both sat down again.

"Are you going to forgive me, Joan?" asked Clara Mulready.

She was plenty good to look at, and if she was acting a part she was doing it perfectly. I didn't envy Joan her job, but Joan wasn't thinking about herself.

"Clara, you don't know what forgiveness means."

"You forgave that robber, Joan—the man who held you up that night when you were driving through the mountains all alone."

"He wasn't my friend in the first place. There was very little forgiveness that he needed. A chance——"

"Give me a chance!"

"Didn't I give you all the chances? I gave you too many, Clara. Do you expect me to forget that——"

"Yes I do! You can forget anything—anything! Why should you remember my part of it, and care nothing at all about what the others did? You're not even angry with that pig Zezwinski. You don't care about Fritz; you've forgotten him already. Mrs. Aintree doesn't even interest you. Why should you blame me for the whole of it?"

"I don't believe I blame you, Clara. I think perhaps I'm just disappointed. I would do anything—anything, if I could only put you back where you were; but all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't do that, Clara."

"Oh, Joan, you couldn't cast me off like an old shoe!"

"Of course not. But you see, Clara, you're no different now to what you were when we first made friends. All along—all the time you've been living here—you've had treason at the back of your mind. That must be, or you wouldn't have listened to Fritz and Mrs. Aintree."

"Well, if that's so, Joan, I've got rid of it! I've cast it out! Joan dear, I've been through hell all night long. I couldn't sleep for crying."

I could have believed that of Joan Angela, but not of her.

"Call me your friend again, and I'll be the truest and loyalest friend that ever lived! You see, Joan, it isn't as if the trick had succeeded; there was no real harm done."

Joan Angela made a gesture between amusement and despair—nothing cynical about it.

"I don't think you can imagine it, Clara, but I would rather have had Zezwinski succeed than learn that you were not my friend."

"Joan, I am your friend! I am! I am! I'll prove it. I'll die for you. I'll do anything."

She broke down utterly and sobbed for several minutes.

"You mustn't cast me off! I won't go! I'll be your——"

"Clara, I wouldn't dream of doing that. You may stay here as long as you wish. Only, you mustn't deceive yourself about it. I daresay you have learned a terrible lesson, but so have I."

"You mean we're just acquaintances? Oh, Joan!"

Joan Angela leaned down and kissed her.

"There. You go back to the house, Clara, and wash away those tears, and play some music, and try to forget it. We three are going to stay here and talk."

Clara Mulready obeyed without another word, not understanding anything, I think, except that she had not been banished

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away from Easy Street. She did not look back, but caught her pony and rode away down-hill with her head drooping and her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Now for goodness' sake," said Joan Angela, "let's talk of something else before I break down and make an exhibition of myself!"

"Let's talk Egypt," I suggested. "What are you going to do about that thousand-acre lot of yours in the Fayoum?"

"Zezwinski and Zoom wanted it mighty bad," said Tryon. "Mrs. Aintree seems to have her eye on it. So does this Egyptian dude I haven't met. I'd watch my step, if I was you, Joan."

"Mrs. Aintree," I said, "is 'a poor thing but her own.' She has ambition, but can't see straight, and keeps out of jail by a string of lucky accidents. If you put a thousand dollars in the middle of an empty lot, she'd tunnel underneath two blocks to get it. Somebody else would get there first, of course, and she'd blame that on human depravity. But she'd be dead sure the thousand dollars was there before she laid her plans to dig, so it's a safe bet there's something in this Egyptian business."

"Why not send one of the boys out to look the place over?" Will Tryon suggested. "There's two or three would like a chance to travel, if they knew their jobs were waiting for them when they come back."

That gave me my opportunity, and I cut loose.

"This looks like a case for Grim, Ramsden and Ross," I said. "From what Zoom told me in Reno, I suspect they're planning to commit crime in Egypt and to get away with it on the strength of pull in the United States. That's where Strange comes in. He turns us loose regardless of expense and as we are known to have no political irons in the fire, we get a rather free hand."

"What would you have me do, then?" Joan asked.

"Use your own judgment," I answered. "You wanted to buy our firm the other day from Meldrum Strange! You don't have to buy a car in order to ride in one, though I grant that you did."

"Tell you what," said Tryon. "Ramsden is a man who'll play straight. Why not give him a lease on that Egypt property on a percentage basis. That way you'll keep control, and get what's coming to you, if there really is anything in it. Turn that over in your mind, Joan Angela."

"What I'm turning over in my mind is a trip to Egypt," she answered. "I don't care for making anything out of that property, but I'm curious to know why others should believe it so valuable. Ramsden, if Meldrum Strange will take this thing up, I believe I'll lend a hand! Moustapha Pasha ought to be ditched; it's a duty!"

"So ought Mrs. Aintree to be ditched," I answered.

"Oh, ——!" Will Tryon groaned. "I had a hunch this affair was going to lead to a mix-up! Let it alone, Joan Angela! Let it alone, for Heaven's sake! Give Ramsden a lease, and let it go at that. You stay here, young lady, where the cream's good, and where the worst that happens is a gun shoved against you on a dark night. That's clean danger. Let those —— 'Gyptians alone. That's my advice."

But Joan Angela doesn't like doing things by proxy. Her friendships and her enmities are first-hand affairs, and she is as direct as some other folk are crooked.

"I'll go to Egypt," she said quietly, looking out over the valley, as if she could see the Nile in the distance.

"You're looking due west," laughed Tryon. "You don't mean going that way 'round?"

"Maybe. Might. What's the difference," she answered. Jeff Ramsden, do you speak for Meldrum Strange?"

"Within clearly defined limits, yes."

"Will your firm look into this?"

I nodded.

"It's a bet, then! Will, I'm going! I'll meet you in Cairo, Jeff, soon as I can get cleaned up here."

It was the first time she ever called me by my first name without adding the other. In some way, without her exactly knowing it, and certainly without my derserving it, I had dropped into Clara Mulready's empty place; for Joan Angela is a woman who would wither up and die, like a flower without its petals, if her huge capacity for friendship could not find lodgment somewhere. She seems to me less sentimental than most women; her friendship does not depend on close quarters or constant intercourse, but it's like a rock when she has once placed it. It stays put. She demands nothing of you, except loyalty.

"Give me an option on your Egyptian

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property," I said. "I won't exercise it. Give me a twelve months' option for one dollar, and have Tryon write in any terms he cares to. You can have it back whenever you say, but I want it in my pocket for a while."

They both agreed instantly to that, but I laughed that afternoon when Tryon produced the document. It covered four foolscap pages, and protected his young employer's interests in a score of ways that not even the wiliest old claim-swapper would ever have foreseen. I had an option, sure enough, and price one dollar, as agreed; but even if I should exercise it, and afterward discover a billion dollars on the property, Joan Angela would still have had the control, and ninety per cent. of the billion. I liked that man Will Tryon. I have kept on liking him better every time we meet. There's something about real loyalty to an employer that ennobles a man in my judgment, and all the more since there's such a lot of the imitation stuff parading itself for praise.

I CAUGHT the train that night at Sacramento, and was in Reno by eleven o'clock. Reno is one of those places where they eat at 6 P. M. and get to bed as soon as the movies are out, but your Egyptian is not so constituted, and, like the leopard, needs a few thousand centuries in which to change his spots; so it was no surprize to find him at that hour sitting in the hotel lobby, very nearly melancholy mad, and being watched suspiciously by a sleepy bell-hop.

He was positively relieved to have somebody to quarrel with, and demanded that I follow him to his room at once.

"You sure ain't goin' to waste good liquor on that heathen?" the bell-hop asked me in a stage aside. "He's one o' these here ar-is-tocrats. He's got more pig in him and less pep than a wienerwurst!"

However, it was the bell-hop's job to run the elevator on demand, and I followed the Egyptian into his room accordingly.

"Now," he said, throwing himself into a rocker, "we two can talk business. Eh? You're no more honest than any other hypocritical American, but you seem to know that Leich girl, and it may be we can come to terms."

Don't you enjoy listening to that kind of insolence? I did.

"Go ahead," I told him. "Sure, I know Miss Leich."

"I've been what you Americans call stung. That brute Zoom is laughing at me. He and his partner Zezwinski played me a fine trick. I paid them fifty thousand dollars for a claim to part of a certain estate, and now Zoom tells me the claim isn't worth ten cents! The swine said it was a client of theirs who sold me the claim, but I don't believe a word of it; they pocketed my money, —— them! And I have nothing to show for it but a receipt that another lawyer told me this afternoon isn't worth the paper it is written on! That's America for you! That's Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—in God we trust—*e pluribus unum!* That's your screaming eagle, and your home of the brave! Home of shabby robbers and shameless women, that's what this is!"

"Undoubtedly you manage those things much better in Egypt," I answered. "What do you propose to do next? Fight Zezwinski and Zoom?"

"Gr-r-r—yah! *Sittîn kilab!* * I have lost fifty thousand *e pluribus unums;* they have them, and that is all about it. *Maalesh!* I am not a rag-picker; I snap my fingers!"

"What then?"

"I return to my main objective."

He glared at me for a moment with the helpless venom of a beast in a trap. He knew he was helpless, and yet hoped to spit and spite his way out somehow.

"I will either get what I came for, or else make it useless to that Leich woman! I could do that easily! However, I will try the former first. In this land of free robbers there is only one argument that has weight. You listen to the chink of money, and to nothing else—unless it is to the man who makes moonshine whisky, and him you pay as if he were the tax-gatherer! Bah! What a rotten country is this America! What thieves! What hypocrites! Fifty thousand dollars, eh! Well, we will see who laughs last! Now, I will talk dollars to you; that is a language that you will understand!"

"I'll try," I said. "I'm no great linguist. My vocabulary in that language is decidedly limited."

"You know that Leich woman intimately, don't you? Get me the title to that

**Sixty dogs! An Egyptian expletive.*

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Egyptian land she owns, and I will pay you anything in reason."

"How much, for instance?"

"I am short of cash. Those swine of lawyers have cost me nearly the whole amount of my letter of credit. If it comes to paying her a large sum for the property I shall have to cable for more funds. Allah! You are a Yankee, are you not? Can't you trick her out of it? See here, if you will get me that property for a thousand dollars, or two thousand dollars or so, I will give you a ten per cent. interest in it, and you will have made your fortune! Take it from her! She has too much money. I have no compunction whatever in depriving such a wealthy female of something that she does not know enough to use!"

"If the land is as valuable as all that, and if I could get it from her, I'd be a fool to part with it to you for ten per cent.," I answered. "You're not talking business."

"Am I not? You listen to me! *You* couldn't use that property. Neither you nor she could use it! Even supposing you could discover the secret of its true value, you would be helpless; for believe me, I am not a man to be laughed at free of charge! Not in Egypt, I am not! Here, these swine of lawyers can take my money and tell me to go to ——; but there, not so! Over there I am a personage—a man of influence I can assure you."

He looked down at his beautiful silk socks, gathered a sort of courage from them, and continued:

"I am willing to be blind, of course. I understand business. You tell me how much you are supposed to pay that woman, and I will not make too close inquiries. If the sum is not outrageous, I will pay it. Go to her as a friend and offer to buy those thousand acres of desert that she owns in Egypt. Offer her a song for it. Say that you wish to own real estate there in order to bring suit as a resident, instead of as a foreigner. Say anything, but get that property for me!"

"What would you say to an option on it?" I suggested.

"For how long?"

"Twelve months."

"Let me see; twelve months? That might do. An option to purchase at the end of twelve months? Yes, that is a clever idea. Being a woman, she would give an option and deceive herself into thinking that she still controlled the property. Yes, that is better; get an option, and pay her very little for it!"

"I have one in my pocket now," I said. "See here."

And I pulled out the paper and displayed it.

"Mashallah! So you are a true Yankee, aren't you! Is it witnessed? Ah!" He looked down at his beautiful socks again, and polished his nails on his sleeve. "Well, that is worth nothing to you, but a very great deal to me. I will buy it from you. What will you take? I offer you ten per cent."

"You might cheat me," I suggested.

"I? I would not even cheat an enemy! I will deal honorably with you. Listen! Those dirty dogs Zezwinski and Zoom were drawing up papers of incorporation for a Nevada company to own and work that property. They assured me a Nevada company can own property in Egypt. Now what we can do is to go ahead with that incorporation—employ another firm of lawyers and let Zezwinski and Zoom rot where they sit—and I will give you ten per cent. of the shares in it in exchange for that option. Your shares will be worth at least a million dollars in one year's time!"

"At that rate the whole would be worth ten million," I answered. "What kind of idiot do you take me for?"

"You will be an idiot if you refuse to listen to me! You will throw away a million dollars for the sake of the money-hunger that burns in your Yankee breast! One word from me in the right quarter and that whole property is worth nothing to you!"

"You'd have to explain that before I'd attach much weight to the mere assertion," I answered.

He looked at me for about thirty seconds from under lowered eyelids—the long-lashed Egyptian eyelids that have been the wonder of the stranger ever since Abraham's descendants went to Egypt, and got stung. They are as attractive as a houri's; deceitful as fame itself.

"In the first place," he said, speaking with his tongue close to his teeth—beautiful white teeth—so that the words rasped, "if you were to go to Egypt with that option in your pocket, it would be disputed. There would be litigation and an injunction and the year would expire before you could do anything. In the second place, your life

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would be decidedly in danger. You know Egypt a little, I believe? You appreciate, then, that it is a land in which death is not difficult to attain, but life has its complexities. Eh? Its risks. You understand me?

"In the third place, failing what is euphemistically termed the act of God, there is the law of Egypt, which is strictly drawn and not to be avoided without skilful and strong influence in high places. In the fourth place, in order that our argument may be four-square, my friend, and you may not delude yourself—as I have already told you, one word from me and the whole value of that property goes up in smoke! I am a man so constituted by heredity, and so convinced of what is due to me, that I would not hesitate to prevent another from getting what I have set my mind on having. I would certainly destroy its value rather than see another enjoy it. So you see, you are helpless in spite of that paper in your pocket."

It was clear enough that I was not going to extract the secret from him by any amount of arguing along that line, just as it was obvious that the way to learn the secret was to dig—out there on those thousand acres in the Fayoum. There was only one piece of information that really seemed worth trying for in that bedroom, and Moustapha Pasha was such an irritable braggart that the effort seemed worth making.

"There's law in this land, too," I said, "although you possibly don't believe it—yet. I think I know enough about you now to have you arrested and held for trial on a charge of attempted extortion. You might not be convicted by a jury. I don't know. But I'm dead sure I could prevent your leaving this country for a year; and a year would be all I need to look into this Fayoum property."

He sneered the way a tiger in a cage does when the keeper passes along inside the guard-rail.

"You would be watched, you know. You wouldn't be able to jump your bail," I added.

"Oh, you Yankees! You all think you're —— smart!" he answered. "Have me arrested! Much good that will do you! I daresay you have not enough imagination to make you dread the retaliation that you will never be able to avoid! But do you, in the fatuous infancy of your foolish, stupid heart, believe that you have me alone to deal with? Idiot. Imbecile! I am a man of importance, it is true, as any ambassador must be. It would cause great inconvenience if you were to immobilize me, as you suggest in your crass ignorance. But—huh—kill me, and you shall see what you shall see! I am one of ten thousand. And every single one of those ten thousand will become your individual, drastic, determined enemy from the moment that you raise one finger to interfere with me in any way!"

Well, I had what I wanted. There was nothing more to be gained by arguing with him. He was only likely to lie if I questioned him further.

"Good night," I said, "I'll think your offer over. See you in the morning, maybe."

If I had been half my size I think he would have tried to murder me before I left the room, but there's a certain advantage in weight and muscle after all. He knew right then that the issue was joined between him and me to a conclusion—knew it as well as I did.

CHAPTER VII

"The answer is still No."
"Then go to the ——!"

NOUREDDIN MOUSTAPHA PASHA lay abed next morning, and I rode a freight train as far as the edge of Wyoming, where I caught the Overland for Chicago and New York. My next job was to interview the boss and talk him over to my point of view.

It was not exactly easy. Meldrum Strange was in one of his cantankerous moods—feeling the weight of his money and disgruntled at the news of labor wars and politics and one thing and another.

"Joan Angela Leich" he fumed, "is a minx. She needs a husband. She's too wealthy to be at large without restraint. I suppose you've fallen in love with her. Is that it?"

"Yes," I said, "we all fall in love with her. Which class were you in, 1913—or later? Mrs. Aintree is more in the field I canter with. She's somewhere near the bottom of this again."

"The ——! You don't mean it!"

Meldrum Strange is much more easily interested in attack than in defense. Without being exactly a muckraker he is keener on exposing crookedness than on protecting or assisting honesty.

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I showed him a typewritten sheet I had found in our record office as we came through. We had been keeping tabs on Mrs. Aintree ever since we took in hand the destruction of her P. O. P. Society, and she was not in position to do much without our knowing it. She had booked her passage for Alexandria—first class, special cabin, self and maid—as the last entry on the sheet made clear.

"The sooner she's out of the country the better for every one, herself included!" was Strange's comment. "We've got our hands full, Ramsden," he went on. "I can't have you cavorting all over the world at the whim of Miss Angela Leich."

He took out one of his black cigars and started chewing it.

"Has she been talking about me? What did she say?"

"She said you're an old fossil. Wants to buy you out."

"Hah! Takes after her father! I fought him for control of the Truckee United. It all but broke us both, but he had the best of it, and he called me a fossil, too. Well, what's in this business?"

Some chance memory of the war between Strange and Joan Angela's father was what tipped the balance in my favor then; for you can't shift Strange from his yes or no, unless some quirk in his own interior turns the trick. Nor can you fathom a man's reasoning. Recollection of that war he waged against Joan's father may have impelled him to keep an eye on her. Perhaps it turned him in her favor; stranger reversals than that have happened. At any rate, he began to listen intently.

"Better wire Grim," he said. "Let him break ground before you get there. You'd better engage your passage. So Joan Angela Leich thinks I'm an old fossil, eh? Tell me, how's she looking?"

There are thirteen lawful ways of reaching Egypt, and one that is unlawful, and the best, though not the easiest, unless you know the right men and where to find them in a pinch. At that, you can work it going much more easily than coming; and the secret, of course, consists in making friends, which is less an art than an inclination. I had the luck that afternoon to come on Cappy Rainer at a club that he frequents, and we sorrowed for a while together about prohibition, until he remembered the flask in his hip-pocket.

"It's all right for seamen," he said. "I approve of it for seamen, both at sea and ashore. But for master mariners and grown men in general it's ——. That's my last word on the subject. So you're bound for Alex, eh? Spending good money on your passage I don't doubt. Firm's money? Put it in your pocket, and save a week as well. The old *Acushla's* dirty, mind; we're carrying coal. She'll be out of drydock day after tomorrow and the mate takes her round to Philly in ballast. I guess we'll have the hatches on a week from now, and I'll bet you fifty dollars I can name the hour and day we drop anchor in Alex harbor."

Well, now you know; but don't blame me if you can't work it too, because, as I said, you have got to know your skipper. They're all great sticklers for the law unless old friendship, which is stronger than all the laws combined, should incline them to have a bet with you.

Grim answered my long cable with two words:

Important. Come.

It was like him to leave everything else unsaid. About all we could do at our end was to watch Moustapha Pasha and Mrs. Aintree, and to wire Joan Angela that the game was on. Strange was against her going to Egypt, on the ground that she would upset the lot of us and make a picnic of what otherwise might be a serious campaign. However the land in the Fayoum was hers, and she was her own mistress. She wired back to engage her passage by Cunard and Transcontinental to Brindisi.

We kept our preparations quiet, naturally; and we knew almost hour by hour the movements of Mrs. Aintree and Moustapha Pasha. We knew that they met in Chicago, for instance, although our man failed to overhear their conversation, and the day before I left for Philadelphia, who should walk into the office but Moustapha Pasha himself, silk socks, silk shirt, silk handkerchief, silk hat and silky, smooth demeanor. He demanded to see me.

"So you are a detective?" he began, without preliminary. "I have found out all about you. I have a system of my own, you see! I pay some one else to watch you while you spy on me—how deliciously simple!"

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"Did you find Mrs. Aintree expensive?" I asked him.

"What do you mean? Who is Mrs. Aintree?"

"I hope she didn't overcharge you."

He nearly exploded, pacing the office floor without a trace left of his suavity—then suddenly stopped and tapped me on the chest with one finger, mastering his rage.

"Yes—since your spies have told you—it was Mrs. Aintree. She described to me how you have hounded her. She told me the nature of your business—the extent of your ruthlessness—the persistence with which you pursue your quarry. Very well. Listen to me. You are business people. I make you a business proposition. I will engage your firm to act on my behalf! I will jettison—is that the word?—my Egyptian partners, and instead of to them I will give my contract to you fifty per cent. of the proceeds from this business! I will let my partners in Egypt go to the ——.

"All you have to do is to exercise that option that you showed me in Reno—keep quiet—protect me from those men in Egypt who will resent my bargaining with you, although I have a perfect moral right to do as I please in the matter—and acquire a bigger sum of money than you ever dreamed of in your wildest imagination! There! That is the kind of man I am! I face issues! What do you say?"

"Where does Mrs. Aintree come in?" I asked him.

"Mrs. Aintree and I intend to be married," he answered pompously.

"Here? In the States?"

"No. In Egypt. I would not marry in this —— *e pluribus unum* of a country!"

"What in Heaven's name do you expect to gain by marrying Mrs. Aintree?" I asked him. Knowing her, and appraising him, I was rather bewildered for the moment.

"That is my business and hers," he retorted. "The question is, do you accept my offer? What is your answer?"

"The answer is no."

"I will give you sixty-six and two-thirds per cent."

"The answer is still no."

"Then go to the ——! I will fight you! And believe me, sir, I fight with deadly weapons! Good-by for the present, and later on good riddance!"

CHAPTER VIII

"If you want to bet I'll bet with you."

SO IT came to pass, as the old-time chroniclers would say whenever they wanted to omit unnecessary detail, that I reached Alexandria ahead of friend and enemy — two weeks ahead of Moustapha Pasha, three weeks ahead of Joan Angela, and exactly one dollar and eighty cents ahead of Cappy Rainer, who likes pinochle. Just as the splash of our anchor announced sunrise Grim stepped off the launch that had come for the pilot and climbed aboard.

The same old scholarly-looking, quiet-eyed Grim, less conspicuous than ever in a gray civilian suit. The only change that I could detect was a greater suggestion of freedom about his movements since he had left the Army. There were fewer folk who must be satisfied at all costs, and more who might be offended without danger of reprisals.

"Here's a wire that came a week ago," he announced with a grin. "What d'you make of it?"

It was from Strange. Grim had decoded it in pencil between the lines.

> Mrs. Aintree and Moustapha Pasha were married in Chicago two days before their boat sailed. Her letter of credit thirty thousand dollars probably exhausts her fortune. She has sold everything she owns except clothes and jewelry.

It was chilly out there on deck, with the dawn wind blowing and the sky that comfortless pale yellow and gray that Africa makes use of as a mask for her morning mood. We went into the chart-room, and the steward brought in hot coffee.

"Has Moustapha already a wife in Egypt?" I asked. "He's a Moslem, and can legally have four wives here; but that wouldn't go in the States. She obviously married him to make sure of being allowed to land in Egypt. He swore to me that he wouldn't get married in the States on any terms, which makes me think he was married here already and afraid of bigamy."

Grim shook his head.

"He's married. But until she makes a kick, there's not much we can do. He could have been pinched in the States for perjury, bigamy, and Lord knows what else. But I doubt if he could be arrested on a

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British ship; and once in Egypt he's safe."

"I suggest that we tell her as soon as she comes that she's one of a harem," I said. "She might take the next ship back and save a lot of trouble."

"Don't you believe it!" Grim answered. "As long as she has thirty thousand dollars she's on Easy Street. She'll make use of him to come ashore, and when the hand's played out she'll simply return to the States and have the marriage annulled."

"Isn't there a law here that can separate them and send her back?"

"If he were a Christian, yes. Not otherwise until she complains. It's old stuff with a new quirk to it," Grim answered. "There's something underneath that sand in the Fayoum, and I've found a man who thinks he could tell if he chose. The law is quite clear; they can't dig on private property, or remove antiquities without permission. Miss Leich left a British Tommy in charge of her huts, and a jackal couldn't dig without his leave. He has even hired extra guards at his own expense, trusting to Miss Leich to repay him. He's a first-class man."

"What's your clue?" I asked.

"Politics! The Gyppies are all sorting themselves out into parties in preparation for independence, and there's going to be a struggle for power that will make home politics look like a one-ring circus. There's only one thing goes in Egypt, and that's money. The party with the biggest chest will get control. Control, of course, means more money, and there you are. There's a political party that is rather small but very influential. One name's as good as another, and they call themselves the Agrarian Bloc.

"They hold no offices at present, but content themselves with working quietly against any other party that shows signs of strength. Their policy is to discredit everybody and keep quiet about themselves, so that when the time comes they'll be the only outfit with any kind of reputation left to lose. They're nearly all big landholders, and they intend to own all Egypt before they're through."

"Is Moustapha Pasha a big landholder?" I asked.

"He was, but he took a post-war header on the bull end of the cotton market—only just avoided bankruptcy. However, he knows a lot of inconvenient things about a lot of other people, and some of the members of the Agrarian Bloc felt they couldn't afford to have him for an enemy. He's in the secret of Miss Leich's sand-patch. The others raised a fund between them and sent him over to the States with an introduction to Mrs. Aintree and to a firm of lawyers."

"But why on earth to her?"

"Oh Lord! She's been in correspondence with half the political schemers of the world for years. She's known in India, China, South Africa, South America—it was only a question with her which cat would jump first. I guess she has laid out most of her income on notepaper and postage stamps, building up an impression abroad that she's a woman of enormous influence. These Gyppies think she's a marvel."

"Do you suppose *she* knows the secret of the sand-patch?"

"Remains to be seen. It was probably her idea to incorporate in the U. S. A.," Grim answered. "You see the idea? As the law stands now, whatever treasure might be discovered on Miss Leich's land would be confiscated by Government. But after the British quit, although the same laws may remain in force nominally, it's going to be much easier to side-step them, provided you have influence. The easiest and most obvious way would be to incorporate abroad, and argue that the law can't be enforced for fear of foreign complications. Get me? The loot would line Egyptian pockets, but the Stars and Stripes would be the banner under which the burglars march. That's the general theory of the thing."

"Then they don't intend to dig until after Egypt gets her independence?"

"I guess not. The scheme is to get possession of that land in the Fayoum so as to prevent anybody else from digging."

"But I don't see yet," I said, "where Mrs. Aintree comes in. What do they stand to gain by letting her share in it?"

Grim laughed.

"My guess is the Gyppies intended to use her and then drop her. She propaganded herself to a point where they believed she had influence in the States. They proposed to use her influence, and then leave her to meditate on balked ambition. But I guess she got the goods on Moustapha Pasha, and, by jiminy, her marrying him like that before he could leave the States

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rather looks as if she were coming to Egypt with a can-opener in her hand! She means business."

"How about murder?" I suggested.

"That's their usual way of turning a page," Grim answered with a laugh. "But she's thought of that. She'll have some way of making it unsafe to murder her. She might easily leave the secret sealed up in an envelope with instructions to some one to open it in case of her death. Supposing they believe she knows the secret, she would only have to let them know that she had done just that. She's much more dangerous than——"

"Let's admit she's deadly dangerous," I interrupted. "What's your plan?"

"Dig!" he answered. "Miss Leich is coming, isn't she? Get her consent and dig. D'you think she'll stand for that, knowing Government will take the stuff?"

"She'll have a perfectly original notion of what to do—and do it!" I answered.

"If they don't get her first!"

"What could they gain by killing her?" I asked. "The property would pass to her heirs, that's all."

"Have you any proof that her heirs wouldn't sell it for a song?" Grim retorted.

"All right. Why not go straight to headquarters? Tell 'em the whole thing?"

"That's what we're going to do," he said, "but we'll have to pick our men. I'll tell you why: It may be a Golconda. The men who are interested are keeping it awfully quiet among themselves, but Narayan Singh and I have overheard some talk, and the figure they name would make the Federal Reserve Board blink—fifty million pounds, or say two billion dollars!"

"Let's hope it's true!" said I.

"Let's hope it isn't true!" Grim answered. "Any such sum of money as that would turn Egypt into Hades! If it's there it means civil war, whoever gets it! With Europe's treasuries in their present state the news of it would drive sane men crazy! We must pick our men and pledge them to secrecy before we tell them anything at all."

"Hasn't the Egyptian Intelligence got any inkling?" I asked.

"Apparently not yet."

"Do you think there's any such sum buried anywhere?" I asked him.

He nodded.

"Why not? Herodotus got his information from men who read off to him the hieroglyphics painted on the outer casing of the Great Pyramid. According to him no less than sixteen hundred talents of silver, which is the equivalent of about three hundred and fifty thousand pounds, were spent on garlic, radishes and onions alone for the labor-gangs. That gives just an inkling of the total cost. The ruler who spent so many millions—his name was Khufu or Cheops—wasn't spending his last nickel. He had his hands on money, that boy had, and there's no record that he left any of it for the next man. Where did it all go? Khufu suffered from megalomania. Every Egyptian king made plans for being as important in the next world as in this and they all tried to take money with them when they died. The man who could conceive the building of the Pyramid, and could force gangs of a hundred thousand men to work at it without pay for twenty or thirty years, could conceive the idea of taking a couple of billion dollars with him into paradise. Is that so, or isn't it?"

"You think this money's in the Pyramid?"

"Of course I don't. Every inch of space inside the Pyramid has been accounted for. There never was anything in there. It's the most monumental bluff in history, fixed up in every way to look like a treasure-house, or a rich man's tomb. When Al Mahmoun's men broke in and found the passage leading to the upper chambers, the whole passage was full of loose stones that had to be taken out one by one before they could ascend. It was physically impossible for any one to have ascended before them since the time when the Pyramid was finished and closed up. Yet when they got to the so-called King's Chamber it was empty. There never had been anything in it. Khufu was supposed to be buried in it, but he wasn't. He was the richest Pharaoh Egypt ever had. He must have been, or he couldn't have built the Pyramid. Where was he really buried and what did he do with his money?"

"I'll bet you the contractors got all he had," I answered.

"If you want to bet, I'll bet with you," said Grim. "But you're making a fool bet. Do you kid yourself that a man who caused to be painted in huge figures on the outside of the building the amount that he spent on radishes would let anybody beat him out of ten cents? Think again. He was a miser! Do you suppose that a man who could

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throw that colossal bluff and command all those resources wouldn't be resourceful enough to hide his savings where nobody could find them?"

"Well, who picked up the trail at this time of day, and how?" I asked. "What makes anybody think that Khufu hid his billions on Joan Angela Leich's lot?"

"That's a long story," Grim answered, "and involves flights of higher mathematics that are over my head. It includes astronomical measurements, an understanding of the precession of the equinox, and Lord knows what else. I suspect there's only one man in the world who really does understand, and he's crazy. I've been trying to get hold of that man for several days past, but they're keeping him *incommunicado*, and as his name isn't known and he seems to have no friends or relatives it's impossible to get a writ of *habeas corpus*. I don't even know where he is. I can only guess."

"How did you learn of his existence then?"

"Narayan Singh got wind of him. Narayan Singh can go snooping around where I would get killed in a jiffy. Between us we cooked up a scheme to get hold of the old bird, but whether we'll succeed is another matter. He's crazy; that's our one hope. Narayan Singh proposes to go crazy too. He's working up the differential calculus in Arabic. The Pyramid is a perfect maze of absolutely scientific measurements that have puzzled the most learned men in the world ever since Napoleon's French commission began their investigation. Nobody could ever dope out why those measurements should be so perfect, and at the same time why there should not be one single mark or figure or inscription anywhere inside the Pyramid by way of explanation. They've all come to the same conclusion, however, that the architect of the building, whoever he was, knew more natural science than all the high-brows in the whole world know today.

"It's the only building in the world, for instance, that is oriented exactly north, south, east and west. It bears an accurate relation to the whole earth's weight, and its original height, before the cap-stone was quarried off for masonry for some Pasha's palace, was an equally accurate proportion of the earth's mean distance from the sun. There's plenty more; that's only by way of illustration."

"A thousand acres is a whale of a big claim to open up," I said.

"Unless we get hold of our learned lunatic," Grim agreed. "But listen—that lot is in the middle of a perfect wilderness; there's nothing to identify it except the beacons left by surveyors twenty years ago; it's a square of sand with a well near the middle. It stands to reason, then, that if these Gyppies are so sure of its being the real place they're going on something else than figures. They've checked up that old lunatic in some way, and they've seen something with their eyes that corresponds with something he has told them. I've been out to the property and looked it over. Barring Joan Angela's huts there's nothing but sand and the well. So it must be the well that constitutes their evidence."

"Is it full of water."

"Up to Nile level. Rises and falls with the Nile."

"How far from the Nile?"

"Thirty miles."

"Too far away for any kind of artificial connection," I said.

"Think so?" Grim answered. "Old Khufu brought some of the stone for that Pyramid from hundreds of miles away in blocks of eighty and a hundred tons—stuff that modern engineers wouldn't know how to shift ten miles, let alone set in position. What would forty miles of tunnel mean to a man of his determination? I'll tell you another thing: Herodotus wrote down a story he heard about an underground passage from the Pyramid to the Nile, through which the water was supposed to flow into a great tank underneath the Pyramid; but the story proved false, for the simple reason that the foundations of the Pyramid are considerably higher than Nile high-water. But those old legends have a way of being based on truth."

"Yes," I said. "There was Jeremy's mine in Midian." *

"Suppose," Grim went on, "that Khufu was trying to make his real tomb impregnable as well as undiscoverable. To flood it with water would be as good a way as any, wouldn't it? You know that story about the Bank of England having a lake of water underneath it? They did the same stunt in Alexandria with the Catacombs—flooded them to keep out robbers, and to

* "The Lost Trooper." *Adventure*, May 30th issue.

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this day the lower levels haven't been explored for that reason; they connected them up with the sea, and you can't pump the Mediterranean dry. All right—the only chance Khufu would have of turning on a limitless supply of water would be to connect up with the Nile. He could start to dig a tunnel forty miles away without attracting much attention, for the Pyramid was probably giving the crowd plenty to think about. If he lined the tunnel with stone that wouldn't necessarily cause comment either, because so many million tons of stone were being hauled to the Pyramid that if he diverted some of it folk might not notice. He could claim he was building a temple somewhere else, for instance. But when the tunnel approached the Nile that would be another matter.

"The banks of the Nile were densely populated; they'd soon get wise to the tunnel, and he'd have to invent a good excuse. Why shouldn't he put a yarn into circulation about a secret waterway from the Nile to the Pyramid? I'm willing to bet that's exactly what he did; and I think that when we come to examine that well on Joan Angela's lot more closely we'll find that it taps the conduit that was designed to make old Khufu's real tomb impregnable against thieves."

The conversation was interrupted by a row on deck, and we went out to see Cappy Rainer struggling under the incubus of U. S. Navigation laws. They're wonderful laws, but then he is a wonderful man, and perhaps they were designed to give such born Vikings their opportunity. I don't know exactly what had happened, but somebody had refused to do something or other, and had threatened the skipper with the U. S. Consul.

"Go to the consul, will ye?" he was roaring, standing on one of the forward hatches with his tunic all unbuttoned. "Maybe. But they'll carry ye there feet forward! Get me in trouble, will ye? All right! I've been in trouble scores o' times. I'm used to it! I'm not one o' your hot-bath seamen that needs clean sheets twice a week before he can stand a watch. Salt-water's my name, and I'm here to prove it! ——'s whiskers! Why, when I went to sea there wasn't one o' you —— would have been allowed to lick the shore-dirt off the third mate's boots, let alone clean 'em! And you stand there and think you'll tell me how to run this ship! Go to the consul, will ye? Not alive, ye won't! I'll beat your brains out first! Ye think maybe I can't lick the lot of ye? Come on and try, you sniveling dock-rats!"

He peeled off his tunic and threw it on the hatch.

"Come on—any one of ye! Come on, four of ye, then, if one's afraid! I'll take and beat your brains into stuff the hogs won't eat! Trouble with the consul, eh? Well, you won't live to know about it! Come on, if ye've got guts! Let's see six of ye try and lick me! Let's see six of ye start for shore without my leave, then! Let's see the —— that dares refuse an order on this ship! Now then—ye heard me say, 'Off-hatches.' Show me the man that hangs back when I count four, and I'll show ye a corpse! One—two!"

It became a mighty busy ship before he started to say three, and then he had to come back on the bridge and repeat the whole argument to Grim and me, with variations explaining what he had said exactly—as if the whole harbor had not heard him.

"That's a hand-picked crew down there," he bellowed, as if he suspected us of being at the bottom of the mutiny. "They're treated good, and paid the salaries o' railroad presidents! Clean sheets twice a week—hot baths—hotel Waldorf banquets three times a day—eight hours' work—and three mates to watch they don't do too much! And, barring they're lazy, they're more or less all right until they get near Egypt. But soon as the smell o' this —— country gets under their noses they're no more good than goats in church! I tell ye, Egypt's a —— of a country! It 'ud rot the good brine out of a State-o'-Maine bosun! I'll be crazy as a coot now till they see my stern-light swingin' out o' here. You two boys had better beat it.

"No, don't stay to dinner. I'm not fit company for a vivisectionist until I'm out o' this! Go on; pitch your grips into a boat and leave me to stand off the —— fool laws o' the United States and Egypt! I'm a master mariner, I am—nursemaid to a crew of dock-rats and third-assistant-vice-consul's office-boy! Goo'-by. See ye sometime, somewhere. Call again when ye want a lift. Push off as soon as ye're in the boat; I'll stand by to kill any o' my soft-sleeping courtezans that tries to jump in

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after ye! They're as crazy for the shore as sharks after garbage! Goo'-by. Goo'-by!"

Cappy Rainer was right about Egypt.

CHAPTER IX

"Lent us by Ah-li-wan."

SO NOW you know how you get ashore when you're not on the ship's papers. What explanation the captain makes to the port authorities is between them and the captain. Grim and I, having time to kill until the night train pulled out, visited the tomb called Komesh-Shukafa, whose lower levels are all under salt water. It is a fascinating place, and exasperating; for the splendor of the upper part and the obvious wealth of the family for whom it was first built, makes it likely that those lower levels contain treasure worth diving for.

"You see," he said, "when invaders came they simply let the water in. Why shouldn't old Khufu have done that? The care these people took makes you think they had something down there worth protecting. What about Khufu then? These people may have spent a hundred thousand dollars on this mausoleum. He spent more than a hundred million on a mere bluff. Do you begin to see the possibilities?"

I suppose, as a matter of fact, you have really got to be a professional miner to feel the full tug of buried treasure at your heart-strings. Cupidity has not got much to do with it. I don't believe the sight of a hundred million dollars in the open would make any decent fellow forget the laws of right and wrong; but it's another thing altogether to believe that some such sum is hidden in the earth, idle and useless. It isn't gold, but the game of getting out the gold and putting it to work, that thrills you and makes you throw dice with fortune. At any rate that's my experience, and I've been mining all my life.

It exasperated me to have no diving-suit, to go down into those lower levels and explore them—made me so discontented that I couldn't carry on a conversation. So you'll understand why I dreamed all that night on the Cairo Express that the Pyramid was on my chest, and that old King Khufu was sitting alongside grinning at me just out of reach. I saw in the dream long processions of *fellaheen*, nearly naked, carrying bars of gold done up in payprus and disappearing with their burdens down a shaft, while the priests of Amen-Ra kept count. And I couldn't get to see where they were putting the treasure because the Pyramid held me fast. Then King Khufu turned into Meldrum Strange, and laughed more diabolically than the king had laughed. And after a while the Pyramid and old King Khufu and Meldrum Strange and Joan Angela and Moustapha Pasha and Grim and Mrs. Aintree became all mixed up in a mad dance amid a shower of gold, while Narayan Singh and a white-bearded, one-eyed lunatic made astronomical calculations with the aid of a planisphere and a surveyor's plane-table. On the whole it was a feverish night, but hardly more so than the weeks that followed.

THE very first day in Cairo produced excitement. We drove straight to Grim's quarters, where Narayan Singh had a meal all ready, as well as information that he was almost bursting to impart; but the great Sikh held his peace until after the servant had left the room and the three of us sat down on the deep corner lounge with our backs against a crimson Bokhara hanging. Then—

"*Sahibs*, I have found the lunatic!" he began.

He was too pleased with the accomplishment to be self-satisfied about it, but not so swept away by his enthusiasm as not to pause and see the effect on us.

"Thus and so it happened," he went on, when we had suitably expressed our satisfaction. "To look for him was to hunt for one star in the Milky Way. To inquire for him was to be mocked. To set spies hunting for him was to warn the enemy of danger, for the spy is very rare who makes a real secret of his purpose. So, what then? I remembered that he is a lunatic, and the nature of a lunatic is this—that forever he repeats his rôle. Like the camel that grinds out *semsem* in a dark vault, he goes round and round, sleeping and waking, one day like another, indifferent to everything except his one obsession. So. And the nature of our lunatic's madness is what? It concerns the pyramid and stars and mathematics. And now another point—as a soldier I have served in many ways. Not only have I fought in nine campaigns, but I have spied; and, whereas any man can fight, or can be taught to fight, the gift of

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spying is a rather rare one. So it has been my lot more often than befalls most men to venture behind an enemy's lines for information; and according to those officers whose orders I obeyed the most useful information I could ever bring them was concerning details of the enemy's supplies. From that they would deduce all manner of things. So I bethought me, and the fashion of my thoughts was this:

"Wherever that lunatic may be, he needs supplies, of one kind or another. But his wants are surely few in the way of food and clothing, and such as they might be they can be bought at any of a thousand places, and a man might hunt for a hundred years in vain tracing the onions and the roots of garlic from one place to another and from hand to hand."

"Quite so," said Grim, "now where's the lunatic?"

But a Sikh will not tell his story in any but his own way.

"I knew no more than you, *sahib*. But I reasoned thus—neither mathematics, nor astronomy, nor pyramids are purchasable in the Fish Market. And a lunatic is often an exacting man. Be he ever so tractable when given freedom to pursue his fantasy, deprived of that opportunity he may grow ravenous, or even die. And considering his importance to the men who hold him prisoner, it occurred to me that they will keep him satisfied if possible. So I turned my back on the bazaars and sought elsewhere, and bye-and-bye, on the afternoon of the same day, Jimgrim sahib, that you left for Alexandria, I found a shop in a quiet street, where a Chinaman sells books on mathematics in many tongues, as well as more sorts of strange instruments than any but he could conceive to exist.

"Now I was once in Shanghai, doing duty there, so I have an entry to the thoughts of Chinamen. I know a little of the way they think, and understand at least the simplest method of approaching them; so that within five minutes of my entering the shop that man and I were engaged in talk that had nothing whatever to do with either madmen or astronomy, but that formed as it were the threshold of mutual confidence, he assuring me that Sikhs are brute beasts who make incorruptible but fierce policemen, and I replying that the Chinese are neither for the present nor the future, but are corpses whom the gas of ancient graves has raised into a sort of imitation life. And on that basis we conversed, becoming very friendly.

"And at last, seeing I was patient, he began to tell me how the Chinese invented all instruments centuries before the West had given up cannibalism. And I told him that was like the Chinese, to invent instruments they had no use for, nor could understand. Whereat he began to show me many marvels, and to tell me the use of them, and to lie about what the Chinese had accomplished with such things three thousand centuries before the present era.

"Thus far, *sahibs*, the trail appeared to lead nowhither. But there was a voice within me that kept urging patience, and you are doubtless familiar with the well-known truth that the only good soldiers are those who are never in a hurry until the scouts have made full report. So, speaking solely with desire to cause him to speak again, I said that the Chinese possibly were living men in those days, but that now they are all dead and incapable of thinking. Whereat, as the way of most men is when so accused, he boasted; and in order to bring his boasting home, he cited instances.

"Said he: 'You see this instrument? Can Sikh eyes see the fineness of it, or has so much liquor dulled the vision?' And he showed me a thing such as I never before set eyes on—a thing of brass that slid inside itself when a screw was turned, so that certain figures came in contact with other figures, and they in turn with more, and therefrom calculations could be made in logarithms without chance of error.

"Said he: 'You see that, don't you, you whose eyes would rather behold strong drink! You think that was made in the West? Look, see, then—here is the signature of him who made it.' And he showed me Chinese characters cut deeply in the brass. 'This was made in Hongkong by a Chinaman,' he said, 'and there is but one other like it in the world.'

"Now, as to that he may, or may not have been lying, *sahibs;* but at any rate I told him he was lying, for, said I, the Chinese forever lie to foreigners. Moreover, I said that the instrument was a simple thing that any fool could design and put to use. Whereat, seeing we enjoyed each other's company, he further controverted me.

"Said he: 'Not only did a Chinaman

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make that, but none other than a Chinaman can use it. None other understands it.'

" 'But the numbers on it,' said I, 'are European.'

" 'Surely so,' said he, 'for it was meant that the barbarians should understand it. But none did. For ten years,' he said, 'I have possessed these two machines, and I have offered them at a fair price to all such barbarians as think themsleves educated and who entered my unworthy shop. Certain of them were curious, as if they beheld a sort of peep-show, but none understood. It was not until a Chinaman sent to inquire for something of the sort that I found a purchaser for one, so that now I have but this one left. It was no barbarian who bought the other, but a Chinaman.'

"*Sahibs*, my heart made a leap within me, for the instinct of an old scout assured me I was on the trail. And so it proved. Again I told him he was lying; for any man, said I, could invent a story of a Chinese purchaser and say without proof this or that to clinch an argument. Whereat he took down from the shelf his book in which he keeps a list of purchasers and what they bought and by how much he cheated them and what not.

" 'See!' he said. 'Look, see, drunkard!'

"He showed me, *sahibs*, the name of an Egyptian—Enim Ismail Bey—with an address beneath it that I also memorized, and I inquired since when were the Chinese ever created *bey*, that being an Egyptian title. So he told me how, not many days since, an Egyptian of that name came to him making inquiries for a calculating instrument, and how the Egyptian was such a muddle-headed fool that he knew neither the name of the instrument nor its purpose, but supposed that one instrument might be as good as another for any mathematical purpose.

"So, because talk led nowhere, and because the Egyptian admitted that the instrument was needed by a Chinaman who could not walk abroad to make his own purchases, that shopkeeper offered to leave his shop and visit the prospective customer. And to that the Egyptian raised objections, saying he would inquire more particularly as to the nature of the instrument required.

"However, the next day the Egyptian returned and accepted the shopkeeper's offer, and the two drove away to a house in the quarter Tewfikyeh, where was a very old and, so he said, sagacious Chinaman who soon made known the nature of his needs, and the shopkeeper returned and brought the instrument, and made a sale at a good price.

" 'So you see,' he said, 'it is only the Chinese who can appreciate such fine calculating instruments.'

"Whereat I said, *sahibs*, that whether he were Chinaman or not, he must be a lunatic to spend his old age addling what few brains remained to him with any such contrivance. And at that the shopkeeper smiled inscrutably and said that very much wisdom always upsets the human brain, for reasons that no Sikh could possibly appreciate.

" 'For as a man grows wise,' said he, 'he differs from the unwise, and in that degree must appear mad to such as lack his understanding.'

" 'So your customer was what a sane man would describe as mad?' I asked him.

" 'A drunkard would call him mad,' said he.

" 'Would a sober and well-educated white man call him mad?' said I.

" 'Of a certainty!' said he. 'For the education of barbarians is such that they call all men mad who surpass them in understanding. Yes, they would probably confine him in a madhouse. To you, who are a Sikh and therefore a drunkard without brains, I answer yes, that he is mad; but to a man of true intelligence I would say—'He knows more than any of us'; and in the presence of the sage himself I touch the earth with my forehead.'

" 'So he is stark mad?' said I.

" 'Stark mad,' said he, 'since we talk the English language in which truth can not be told.'

"So I knew, *sahibs*, that I had found the address of the lunatic, and I went off in search of the place and discovered it easily, for it is a big house set in the midst of others in a row, none touching, but all close together—a long street of houses of the better sort, but not so modern, nor yet so well cared for as in certain other streets near by. The windows are heavily barred, and there are shutters on nearly all of them, and although I watched for several hours none came and none went through the door that opens on the street.

"So, being weary, and needing time to think, I set certain of our men to watch that door all through the night. Four men I set on watch, so that if as many as three should

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fall asleep there would still be one keeping vigil. And all four swore that none slept, yet that none came or went through that door; nevertheless, that a light had shown until after midnight in an upper window. So, soon after dawn, I myself returned to that street to study the situation fully and conceive a plan.

"There was no light burning then. There was nothing to show that the house was occupied. But it was early, and the tradesmen who deliver milk and such things were delivering from house to house. As I have said, *sahibs*, those are houses of the well-to-do—of folk who eat luxuriously in the European fashion. Nevertheless, I observed that a man with a basket delivered at the house next door to the one I was watching such things as rice, ghee, garlic and dried fish; moreover that the quantities were small, as if for one individual and he particular about the freshness of his food.

"I followed that man back to the stall in the bazaar whence he had come, and behold yet another Chinaman! But he, observing me to be a Sikh, and having memories no doubt of Sikh policemen in the treaty ports of China, was afraid to tell me anything, beyond that he delivered food at that house daily, now one thing and now another, but always in small portions. I asked him who paid for the stuff, but he answered that one man's money is as good as another's and that it is all one to him who pays, so be that he gets what is due him.

"So I sent some of our own men out again to make inquiries, and within the hour I knew that both those houses are the property of one Zagloush Pasha, a reputedly wealthy man who owns much land in the Fayoum, and that there is a covered way connecting them together from the rear, which can not be seen from the street because of the shrubbery.

"Now this Zagloush, *sahibs*, is the same who is said to be the leader of the so-called Agrarian Bloc, whose politics consist in abusing all men and supporting none—the same, in fact, who sent Moustapha Pasha to America. Therefore there is no longer doubt in my mind that the lunatic we seek is secluded in that second house belonging to Zagloush, where they doubtless keep him occupied with calculations, lest he grow restless, and perhaps escape and make known his secrets elsewhere.

"In your absence, Jimgrim sahib, I was puzzled what to do. In this land, as in most others, bribery is the key that opens doors; yet in this case bribery would likely be expensive, and though I had no fear that you would question my accounts, nevertheless it is not the part of a faithful man to spend his employer's money recklessly. So I took thought again, and went back to the shop of the Chinaman who sells surveying instruments and so forth, whose name is Ah Li Wan—or so says the sign above his door; they lie concerning names, those Chinamen.

"To Ah Li Wan I said: 'Your miserable countryman for whom that thing of brass that slides within itself was bought is in bad hands. Is it good,' I asked, 'that a man such as he is should be poisoned slowly?' And he said no, that such a thing was not good. And I, knowing how the Chinese think on such matters, asked him, 'Which is better—to act as a son toward his father, or as the barbarians behave, neglecting the old in favor of the young because the young have strength?' And he answered me with a saying of Confucius. Something about ancestors; some nonsense—I forget the words.

"So I said to him: 'That old man,' said I, 'remains in that house because he has nowhere else to go; and I take pity on him, having lived in China, and having received on more than one occasion great kindnesses from the Chinese. And it stands to reason,' I said, 'that if he were to be provided with a home more to his liking, among friends instead of enemies—such as you, for instance, could contrive—he would come there willingly. The sage is mad,' I said; 'he loves such instruments and things as you have here and, being old, he enjoys deference. If you would make a home for him, I think I could contrive that he would come to live with you.'

"However, Ah Li Wan was afraid. He refused to interfere, saying that his business might be ruined if he were to make enemies among Egyptians; but he said he would contribute toward the old man's comfort, if that could be managed secretly. Whereat the gods whom I have always worshiped put a new idea into my head, and I made him a proposal, to which he consented after an hour or two of argument. And the outcome of that is thus, *sahibs*—come with me and behold."

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HE LED the way up-stairs, and opened the door of a room as big as the one we had been sitting in—a room that Grim had had no present use for, but had been obliged to rent along with the rest. It was fitted up with almost no furniture except a truck-bed in one corner, but with such a medley of globes, calculating instruments and what not that it looked like a museum almost.

"These," said Narayan Singh, "are lent to us by Ah Li Wan, I signing the receipt for them and guaranteeing the return of all things in good condition on demand. It has cost us nothing; Ah Li Wan paid transportation charges. So there remains, *sahibs*, nothing but to bring that ancient here, after which we will flatter his self-esteem and he will tell us all he knows."

"How do you propose to get him here?" Grim asked.

"I have considered that." Narayan Singh looked hard at me. "You, I, and Ramsden sahib have contrived many a disguise together; moreover, we have risked our necks, and it is not good to let courage die from disuse merely because two of us have left the Army. I will be a lunatic. I will be a Sikh from Singapore, who has gone mad from too much Chinese education. And you, *sahibs*, will be friends of mine, the one an Arab and the other simply an American, who has traveled much and studied deeply in many lands. Ramsden sahib must wear horn-rimmed spectacles, and that will be disguise enough. We will call at that house this evening, if you *sahibs* give consent, and if all goes well at least two of us will get to see that ancient Chinaman. We will have a motor-car waiting in the street, and only Ramsden sahib will be in any serious danger, and not even he to any serious extent, because he is strong and men will think twice before they offer him violence."

Outside in the street a military band went by, playing an air from the "Mikado," followed by the tramp of sixteen-year-old boys—for such the British soldiers mostly seem to be in these days. Through the window we could see black-veiled Moslem women elbowing flirtatious, unveiled Levantines, and men of every shade of creed and color from Nubian ebony to the thin-blooded white of the fellow who has been too long away from home. A man rode by through the crowd on a milk-white donkey, followed by a string of Coptic monks in single file, stepping aside nervously to avoid motor-cars and offered drinking-water by a man who sold it from a decorated brass jar hung with bells.

Narayan Singh, black-bearded and enormous, began to busy himself getting out disguises for himself and Grim. And Grim, in a gray tweed suit, gray-eyed under bushy eye-brows, sat down cross-legged in the corner, leaned against a hanging from Bokhara, and chuckled silently.

CHAPTER X

"Whom Allah hath made mad let none offend."

WE SPENT that whole afternoon rehearsing, not that my part was likely to be difficult, nor that either of the others were likely to misplay, but in order to get the teamwork into it. Grim doesn't have to pretend to be an Arab; he is one as soon as he puts the costume on—thinks, speaks, looks and acts as if he had been born somewhere east of the Red Sea, with the only difference that he knows more than all the Arabs put together about the white man's view of things. It won't be until a few millions of us on both sides get that gift of Grim's, and learn to see both sides at once, that East and West will ever really meet.

Grim and Narayan Singh between them had enrolled and broken in nearly a dozen good spies, that being mainly a matter of selection in a land where intrigue is the universal custom and spying comes like breathing, naturally. Two of them kept watch on the house we were to visit, and not long after dark one of them brought word that Zegloush Pasha was within doors. We set off at once then in a hired cab, Narayan Singh sitting with his back to the horses vulture-fashion with his bearded chin resting on his knees.

Grim wore a white cloth turban wrapped around a *tarboosh*, and all the other dignified paraphernalia of an *ulecma*, or learned Moslem, a costume in which he was sure of getting at least outward respect from any one who professed the creed of the Prophet. Narayan Singh was also clothed in white—good, well-laundered, expensive linen; for it does not pay to approach the house of an Egyptian Pasha looking like a person who would have to go to the —— if told to do

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so. The Egyptian aristocracy is one of wealth exclusively and its manners correspond.

In the more or less dark, at a point midway between two street-lamps, half a block away from the house we were to visit stood the motor-car Narayan Singh had arranged for, with one of our best spies behind the wheel. So we sent the cab away and approached the front door boldly, Grim and I each taking an arm of Narayan Singh and half-dragging him between us, as if he were a cripple as well as daft.

For a minute after we had rung the front-door bell we were examined through a pane of glass by a Nubian servant, who finally opened the door about six inches and took my card.

I told him I was a traveler with a problem that I believed would interest his excellency, but that if he did not care to see me there were doubtless others who would be glad to know about the matter. That piqued curiosity, and turned the trick. I was invited in.

So I left Grim and Narayan Singh in the hall, Grim on a chair ostentatiously in charge, and Narayan Singh squatted on the floor mumbling to himself and tracing imaginary figures on the carpet with one finger. I was ushered into the library.

It was quite a magnificent room, if mere expenditure of money means magnificence. Most of the furniture was from Grand Rapids, but some might have come from the Tottenham Court Road, London, and some from France and Belgium. It was all extravagant, and beastly; but the shelves were liberally lined with books, some of which appeared to have been used a time or two.

Zegloush Pasha rose from a rocking-chair to meet me. He was a rather short, extremely stout man with a politician's smile—little black mustaches, carefully barbered and upturned—little bright black eyes set deeply in fat cheeks—a *tarboosh* at an angle on his close-cropped head—fat fingers—diamond ring on the right hand, emerald on the left—European dinner-clothes, and ladylike patent-leather shoes.

"You have a problem—Mr.—ah—Ramsden? Have a seat, please, and explain. You are American?"

"Yes. But I have a Sikh servant and an Arab friend. They are giving me trouble at present. The Sikh is a man whom much learning has made mad. He's a mathematician, who had his teaching from a Chinaman in Singapore. He and my Arab friend have been wandering about the bazaars together, and have met some Chinamen who said that my servant's old teacher is here in your house. That, of course, means nothing to me, but to my Sikh servant it appears to mean a very great deal. He has been unmanageable ever since, vowing and declaring that he will see his old teacher or die in the attempt. Finally he threatened to go to the police about it, and actually did start off to do that.

"So my Arab friend and I talked it over, and realizing that we couldn't keep the Sikh quiet we thought it better to put the problem up to you. You see," I said, "he's not sufficiently mad to be locked up, but he's a determined fellow; and he and my Arab friend both swear that they have witnesses who can prove that this old Chinese teacher is in your house. It occurred to me at once how distressing it might be for you if the police were to take the matter up and make inquiries, and it seemed at least possible that you might prefer to let him visit the old Chinaman, as the simplest way out of the difficulty."

There used to be nine wonders in the world. Nowadays, of course, there are nine million; but the most wonderful of all of them is the stupidity of people, who let such folk as Zegloush become party leaders. Crowds are not nearly as stupid, really, as the men who control them; yet why do the crowds submit? That little, fat, beady-eyed son of a Turk sat looking at me with every motion from suspicion to bewilderment crossing his face in turn. He was at a loss what to say or do without a confidant with whom to talk it over first.

"But where did they get this information?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I said. "But they're perfectly sure of it. And, as I told you, my man is mad and not responsible. He talks of accusing you of keeping his old teacher a prisoner; he says he'll get all the Indians in Cairo to come and storm your house. Obviously that kind of thing won't do; no man of influence desires a scandal of that kind. And it would be so easy to calm him by letting him see his Chinese friend."

"You think so?"

"Oh yes. All he cares for is mathematics.

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He wants to talk in terms of calculus again with somebody who understands him. He'll be perfectly quiet if he's allowed to do that."

"This is very inconvenient," said Zegloush Pasha. "Why this unusual hour? Would not another time do as well?"

"As far as I'm concerned;" I said. "If I take the Sikh away now without his having seen his friend I'm afraid there'll be trouble, that's all."

"Then you yourself do not want to see this Chinaman?"

"Oh, no."

He looked relieved. Egyptians despise Indians as thoroughly, almost, as Indians despise Egyptians. Zegloush would have refused me pointblank; but a Sikh was a different matter.

"Are you a resident of Cairo?" he asked me suddenly.

"No. Here only for a month or two. I'm hoping to send my Sikh back to India, if I can find somebody to look after him on ship-board."

"Oh, in that case—one does not like, you know, to have residents of Cairo too inquisitive into one's household; but if this Sikh is out of his wits, and is returning to India, there is really no objection. My servant shall take him to see his friend.

"Better not leave him alone with the servant," I suggested. "Let my Arab friend go too and keep an eye on him. I don't want to cause trouble in your house."

"Let me see them both."

I followed him out into the hall, where Grim greeted him with profound solemnity, and for a minute or two he and Grim conversed in Arabic, Grim quoting that Arab text about "whom Allah hath touched and made mad let none offend." In fact, Grim acted his part of learned Hajji so well that Zegloush turned and swore at his servant for his bad manners in leaving such a worthy waiting in the hall. And all that while Narayan Singh kept making imaginary figures on the carpet with one finger, mumbling to himself.

"What does he say his friend's name is?" asked Zegloush—not unexpectedly.

That was the one question we had dreaded, but Grim was ready with the only solution of the difficulty that we had been able to think of, and it got by.

"He thinks his friend is in trouble and that he might not want his real name known," he answered. "The *Uleema* saith: It is wisdom not to inquire too closely into what does not concern us."

"*Taib!*" said Zegloush; then, turning to the servant—

"Show both of them the way."

I followed Zegloush back into the library, and there we sat and talked interminably, he glancing at his watch from time to time with ever-increasing restlessness. He was a well-informed and well-read man on the surface, but, in common with most of his kind, preferred his learning done up in nice little parcels to be swallowed whole. He had smatterings of everything by heart, from Æschylus to Beaudelaire, and could trot out a quotation to cap any argument. But no philosophy, nor any politics meant a thing to him beyond that Zegloush Pasha must ride the rising wave at all costs.

At last, when we had talked for nearly an hour, he rang for the servant and told him to go and cut short the interview.

"For I have an engagement," he explained, "and I can really not go away and leave strangers in my house."

The servant came back presently in a great state of excitement. Sikh, Arab and Chinaman, he said had all vanished; moreover, two Nubians, supposed to be on guard in the passage outside the Chinaman's door, were bound and gagged.

"What does this mean? What have you done?" Segloush demanded angrily. "Who are you? What——"

He jumped from his chair shook his fist at me and rushed by, but paused in the doorway to give orders to the Nubian servant.

"Watch him!" he ordered. "Don't let him move out of here!"

Then he was gone, on the run, through a swinging door at the end of a passage that led into the hall; and the Nubian proceeded to obey orders. I liked that Nubian, for he was a faithful fellow. The disproportion between his size and mine was something not to be ignored, so he stepped to the wall where a shield and simitar hung between two book-cases, and took down the simitar. But he forgot the shield, so I took that, and it was two full feet from rim to rim, as heavy as so much solid metal. I thrust it out toward him and he slashed at it, breaking about six inches off the simitar's blade; so then I thrust the shield into his face and strode past, after which

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I had nothing to do but guard my retreat to the front door—a comparatively simple matter. I was outside in a jiffy, and in the street the next.

THE motor-car was gone, but Grim was waiting for me at the corner of the street, chafing his wrist and his face alternately.

"We had quite a job with two Nubians," he explained. "There's a cab, let's take it."

"Did the chink come willingly?" I asked as we drove toward home.

"He was crazy to come. Talks English. Said they'd kept him in that room so many weeks he'd forgotten how long, and that although they'd bring him almost anything he asked for they wouldn't let him out for fresh air. Soon as we'd gagged that pair of Nubies we just ran down-stairs with him, unbolted the front door and out into the street. I've been waiting half an hour for you."

"What is the prospect of pursuit?" I wondered.

"None. Zegloush won't draw attention to his having kept a prisoner in his house for weeks. But you may bet your bottom dollar they'll do something, and do it quick! They may try using influence to get us jumped on by the Government. They may try murder—poison is likeliest. But my guess is that the first attempt will be corruption."

"They don't know who we are yet," I answered.

"They'll not take long to find that out. They own more spies, and better ones, than Government does."

At any rate, we were in for whatever was going to happen, or, as a Moslem would prefer to state it, "that which is written shall come to pass," and the next step obviously was to interview the Chinaman. We found him seated in Grim's corner in the big sitting-room, being waited on by Narayan Singh—a dwarf served by a giant. He was ancient, and astonishingly frail to look at, dressed in black alpaca clothes and a black cloth Chinese cap, with big horn spectacles and thick-soled Chinese felt shoes. Somehow, although a prisoner, he had managed to keep himself shaved and clean, and the fingernails of his left hand were all unbroken, although he had no shields for them. The criss-cross crows-feet at the corners of his eyes, and the cheek-lines that paralleled his drooping, dyed mustache made him look good-humored, and he was certainly not in the least afraid, but smiled on the Sikh's ministrations with the air of an ancient guest accepting what was due him.

"Since your excellency has consented to occupy my most unworthy house," said Grim, "is it permissible to know the honored name of the great one?"

"Chu Chi Ying," he answered smiling.

I knew who he was then. Not only Cappy Rainer, but at least a dozen other sailors had told me of the old Chinaman who used to teach mathematics to sea-captains waiting for a cargo and ambitious for their extra-master's ticket. They always spoke of him with wonder as a man who could carry in his head any combination of figures whatever, and who seemed to know such things as tide-tables and the astronomical calendar by heart.

"From Singapore?" I asked, and he nodded again.

"How did your excellency come to visit Cairo and to be imprisoned in that house?" Grim asked him.

"Came look-see Pylamid."

"Wanted to find out who was buried in it, I daresay?"

Chu Chi Ying shook his head violently.

"No man bellied in him. Pylamid is astlonomical monument, and has told one stlory four-thousand year long, but velly learned plofessors all look other way and teach foolishness. Same as usual," he added, with neither sarcasm nor rancor. "Mathlematics saying one thing, plofessors saying something else. I come look, see. I know."

"How did Zegloush get hold of you?" asked Grim.

"He see me one time near Pylamid. Must have money. Not much. Must have some. He see me teaching mathlematics to one velly sick man who stop at Meena House Hotel and come sit in sun near Pylamid daily. Velly sick man much more sick; go back and lie down in hotel. Zegloush stay by me and talk many questions, not understanding what I say, but his fliend he understand something. His fliend stand by and listen. By and by they talk. By and by Zegloush come back and say, 'You teach my son mathlematics.' So happened."

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"You told him what you know about the Pyramid?"

He nodded.

"Big fool likee fat flirst mate wantee master's ticket. By an' by he understand something."

Well, we fed the old gentleman and did our best to make him feel at home. He scorned Grim's marvelous curry, and would take nothing more than rice with a little garlic in it washed down with copious drafts of tea, but he seemed to enjoy our hospitality immensely and beamed grateful acknowledgment whenever anything was done for him. So, after our own meal was finished, seeing the good humor he was in Grim pushed a table up against the corner seat, set Chinese drawing materials on it, and we three gathered around to try and get him to expound his secret.

He was perfectly willing. With a few strokes of the brush he drew for us a picture of the Great Pyramid in sections, showing the interior galleries and chambers. He drew it with the swift precision of a man who has studied his subject for years and knows the details all by heart; and then with the persuasive charm of the philosopher who loves to teach he began at the beginning and told us the story of the Pyramid and what it meant, illustrating each step mathematically.

His English improved as he warmed to his task, and he did not seem to mind how often he was asked to repeat a statement or its explanation. But at the end of it—which was long after midnight—although we all three undertood what he claimed to have proved, the maze of calculations through which he had led us was still a maze to me and I couldn't have repeated the hundredth part of it. Even Grim, to whom mathematics is like music, a delight, laughed when I asked him how much he had understood.

"He's over my head. I can't follow his proofs. Yet—aren't you convinced?"

I was, and we all were. As far as I could make it out Chu Chi Ying's theory was this: There were men in the days when the Pyramid was built, who knew Knowledge. Abstract knowledge. And abstract knowledge was their notion of the afterlife and what we call heaven. Therefore, the attainment of abstract knowledge meant eternal life. But—and here was the rub, as I understood it—abstract knowledge could not be understood unless first concretely expressed in some way. In other words, he who believed he had attained to abstract knowledge had to prove it, and to leave his proof for others to follow if they could. So the Pyramid was an effort on the part of old King Khufu to express concretely the sum total of the abstract knowledge that had been taught to him by the sages of his day—who came from abroad, by the way; they were not Egyptians. But that was not all.

Now mind you, I'm hazy about all this, being one of the concrete fraternity from shoe-sole to occiput. I'm simply trying to set down all that I could gather from the learned lecture of a nice old Chinaman, who was sufficiently abstract to be satisfied with rice and tea, whereas I eat porterhouse steak as often as I can get it.

According to Chu Chi Ying then, as I understood him, abstract knowledge is infinite, and therefore has no end. One thing leads to another, as it were, and so on for ever and ever. There's no stopping-place; nowhere where you can say: Here is the end of knowledge, or of this particular branch of it.

Therefore, he who seeks to express in concrete terms—as in a pyramid, for instance—the abstract knowledge that he has made his own must take care to express its infinity in some way. It must not be complete in itself, but must lead on to something else; and it must in some way provide a connecting link, however obscure and difficult to trace, which other men may follow if they will.

According then to that ancient system of metaphysics, however much Khufu might wish to use his pyramid—his concrete expression of abstract knowledge that is to say—for a blind to prevent thieves from finding his real tomb, nevertheless, if the knowledge he had gained was to be of any use to him in the next world, he was obliged to incorporate in the Pyramid some means whereby men might follow him step by step, if they could puzzle it out.

And at that point came in Khufu's limitations—his heathenism, materialism, or whatever you care to call it. He believed, in common with most of the educated folk of that day, that the door of the tomb in which his body was to be interred was the actual door of the next world, and that whatever he should take with him into his tomb, provided he could keep it in there,

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would be his in the next world also. So unless he chose to turn his back on his beliefs, he was compelled to incorporate in the Pyramid some intelligible clue to the whereabouts of his next step forward, which he believed his private burying-place to be.

Does it sound like lunacy? May be it was and is. Maybe every speculation on the next world and the means of getting front seats there is lunacy. And undoubtedly our old Chinese friend had got himself accepted as a lunatic by the Egyptians to whom, in the innocence of a craving to instruct, he had confided his discovery. But those Egyptians had been just as much convinced as Grim, Narayan Singh and I were that there were facts and real pots of gold at the foot of Chu Chi Ying's theoretic rainbow.

Moreover, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and always was. It is possible that Chu Chi Ying was wrong, and that Khufu did not mix his pudding in that way at all. We, who have not spent fifty or sixty years in analyzing all the evidence, have a perfect right, of course, to criticize Chu Chi Ying's deductions and to label him a lunatic. But was there any pudding? If what Chu Chi Ying described to us was true, were there any such clues contained in the Pyramid as he maintained there ought to be, and if so what were they, and where did they lead?

He laid aside that large sketch of the Pyramid that he had made, and drew a map of the Fayoum, showing the Nile, the Pyramid, the desert and the distant hills. Then, using the stem of the brush-pencil to measure with, he placed with great care a drawing of the Sphinx.

"You know liddle of Sphinx?" he asked, and grinned. "Plenty men know Sphinx made liddle. None guess, beclause not know what liddle is. Liddle of Sphinx, liddle of tomb of Khufu. Samee thing!"

"Then is the tomb of Khufu underneath the Sphinx, or inside it?" I asked him.

"Is point of departure inside ship?" he retorted with a dry little cackle of amusement. "Fat fool first mate wanting ticket askee same question!"

He tapped his forehead meaningly with one lean finger.

"Business of think, not guess! You know tligonometly? You know tliangulation? You know what base is? So. Look, see."

He went into a maze of calculations then that would baffle an astronomer who hadn't tables to fall back on. Chu Chi Ying used never a note, set down no figures, hesitated not one second, but reeled off—in English, mind you—numbers running into billions, pointing with the long nail of his left forefinger to the various details of the Pyramid's construction as he dealt with them mathematically, one by one. He calculated for an hour. He dragged in the precession of the equinoxes and law of gravity, the speed of light, and the mean distance between the earth and sun, and related all that in some inscrutable fashion, that seemed plausible while he was doing it, to the inside measurements of the empty granite sarcophagus—so-called—that was all they ever found in the Pyramid when Al-Mahmoun's men broke in, 800 A.D. And the long and short of all that was, as he announced triumphantly at the conclusion, that the base of the Pyramid on the side opposed to the Sphinx is the base of a theoretical triangle, whose apex falls exactly on the opening into Khufu's real tomb!

"And I go, look, see!" he added. "Answer collect. Plerfectly collect! Tomb there!"

Grim asked him to figure out the result on paper, giving the site of the supposed real tomb but omitting details of the calculations, and he promised to do that the following morning, saying it would take time to draft it out with the aid of instruments.

"Have you any idea what is inside the tomb?" I asked him.

"Mummy of —— fool Khufu!" he answered.

"Anything else, d'you suppose?"

"Heap much plenty money!"

"Any way of guessing how much?"

"No can guess. Can reckon."

"Reckon away then, your excellency, unless you want to go to bed."

Now he began unraveling the mysteries of another law that he said was one of the things men understood in those days. It included the law of summation. He said that the arrangement of the stars in the sky was governed by it—of the branches and twigs and leaves on a tree—of the seeds in a flower—of the proportions of dry land and water that go to make the world. He said it governed the proportions of the vases that the Chinese artists made so wonderfully in the reign of the Emperor Ming,

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and went on to add that it was the secret of all wealth, and of all true architecture, and of all true growth and accumulation.

According to him the Pyramid expressed, by means of some abstruse relation between the number of courses of stone and the height and weight of the finished building, not only the number of ingots of gold and silver that Khufu caused to be buried with him in his tomb, but their exact dimensions, purity or fineness, and the order of their arrangement underground. Then, for our special edification, he jotted down on paper the totals in silver and gold in English ounces, and translated that into pounds sterling at approximately current market rates.

I simply refuse to repeat the total. It was staggering. The famous Comstock Lode with its total output of seven hundred million dollars was a dwarf beside it, and if there was a word of truth in what Chu Chi Ying undoubtedly believed then Grim's description of Joan Angela's lot as a Golconda was a ridiculous understatement. You couldn't believe it, for your mind refused to take it in. We three sat back, and two of us whistled; the third, Narayan Singh, grinned foolishly, and Chu Chi Ying sat and nodded at us, much more delighted with his mathematical solution and with our bewilderment than with any thought about the value of the gold.

"The question now is, how to get at the stuff," said Grim.

"No can get," said Chu Chi Ying with an air of finality.

"Why not?"

"Too much heap plenty water."

"Oh ——!" laughed Grim. "Let's wake up now and go to bed, or he'll tell us the number of pints of water presently."

CHAPTER XI

"Too much water!"

TO CHU CHI YING mathematics were religion. From the moment the little old man started figuring, and interpreting the figures he felt himself in touch with the Infinite, and was happy. The rest of us reacted in different ways. Narayan Singh, for instance, regarded the whole thing as a fairy tale and believed it on that basis; he could gravely question facts that appealed to the Western mind, while jumping at deductions based on argument that most Westerners would instantly reject.

Grim, on the other hand, was noncommittal. Unlike the Sikh, he did not accept the whole argument as proven merely because it bordered on metaphysics; but he did not reject it, even if he could not understand it. Grim was willing to go forward and investigate. I was utterly incredulous after a night's sleep, refusing to concede the possibility of any such mass of bullion in one place. I knew what a magnet it would be, and how surely men would have persisted in their search for it.

"Besides," I said, arguing the point with Grim, "there can't have been all that much gold in those days. If there was, where did they get it from?"

"Why not?" he retorted. "Where does gold go to anyhow? They had gold to burn in Babylon; where is it? How much gold has been discovered in the world in our day? What has happened to it all? The banks and government treasuries can't account for half of it, to say nothing of what was left by the last generation. Where did all the gold go that Spain won from Mexico and South America? If the stuff can disappear out of circulation nowadays, it certainly could then with an autocrat like Khufu doing what he darn pleased. If he could tell off a hundred thousand men to build a Pyramid, he could send another hundred thousand to the mines for that matter; and the world is chock-a-block with ancient workings that nobody can set a date to or explain. If there's any gold at all in Khufu's tomb there may just as easily be a whale of a lot. Let's go look."

There was nothing much that we could actually do, of course, until Joan Angela's arrival. On the other hand, there was nothing to be gained by hanging around in Cairo, where we might prove easy marks for Zegloush and his gang. So we hired a big car, and persuaded Chu Chi Ying to come with us. We started an hour after dawn, and none of us noticed any spies lurking near the house, but what we did see, as we sped toward the outskirts of the city, was extremely obvious signs of discontent—mobs gathering even at that hour, and furious spell-binders haranguing them from windows and similar safe places.

Our Western mob-orators are mere deadheads compared to the agitators of the

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East, and for producing quick action they are as oxen compared to gasoline. We began to be pelted with rocks and the windshield was smashed before we were out of the city, and we heard the bugles blowing at the Citadel to announce that Tommy Atkins was turning out to his ancient duty of restoring order.

I don't think that even Grim quite realized as yet the extent of the influence of that Agrarian Bloc that Zegloush nominally controlled. The mob was turned out for no other purpose than to provide a screen behind which to invade our quarters, although the story they told to arouse the mob was that the British Government had purposely reduced the price of cotton in order to impoverish Egypt and keep the country that much more easily in subjection. Our quarters was the only place raided and searched.

In blissful ignorance of all that, we bowled

out along the good macadam pike under the overarching lebbakh-trees as far as the Great Pyramid, and then struck out across the desert with the Sphinx behind us. Chu Chi Ying had not had time to draw his map for us, but there was no doubt of the direction, for there were still traces here and there of the track made by the lorries when Joan Angela had had to keep so many invalided Indians supplied. Several tracks, in fact, converged toward that land of hers, for the well was the only one for scores of miles at which sweet water could be had without payment.

We had to drive slowly, for fear of shaking Chu Chi Ying to pieces, so it was nearly noon when we reached the serried rows of long unpainted huts and were accosted by a man in a blue shirt with blue powder-marks all over his face and an unmistakable air of delegated authority. His back was truculent, and his clean shaven Cockney face suggested the uncompromising impudence of drawn brass. He gave us a taste of his temper before he recognized Grim, for his eyes were the worse for blinking across sun-baked desert.

"You can 'ave water for yer rydiator, and then sling yer bloomin' 'ooks. The howner o' this plaice don't allow no trespassin', so now yer know. The 'uts ain't for saile, nor yet the land neither. My orders are to warn everybody off. Can yer read that notice? Ow! It's you, sir, is it? News o' Miss Leich by any chance?"

He was a strange cuss. He had six Gyppies there, whom he had paid out of his own pocket hitherto to help him guard the place, and he had drilled them so that they jumped to attention whenever he moved his head. There was not a nail missing from all those huts; he had kept the blown sand shoveled clear; and although paint was lacking, and much of the woodwork had cracked in the dry heat, the camp was as ready for use as faithful obstinacy had been able to contrive. Even the cheap brass door-knobs were clean and bright, and the only liberty he had taken with his employer's property had been to break up some benches for the construction of a long water-trough beside the well. He apologized to Grim about that.

"There weren't no other wye, sir, o' gettin' these 'ere Harabs an' their camels watered and off the lot. They was near drivin' me crazy, 'angin' round all day dippin' out water a quart at a time."

That provided us with a perfect excuse for examining the well without taking him into our confidence. The well stood practically in the center of the camp with buildings on three sides of it, and beside the old-fashioned bucket and beam arrangement there was a gasoline pump installed by Joan Angela's direction; but the pump had long been out of order, and Grim suggested putting it to rights.

The well had a score of remarkable features. It was not especially deep; a plumb-line touched bottom at thirty-five feet below water-level, and the water at that time was fifteen feet below the surface. The maximum diameter was slightly more than six feet, and there seemed to be no cistern at the bottom; nevertheless, the supply of water was apparently inexhaustible, for

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however much was pumped out it was said never to make any difference to the level, which responded to nothing else than the rise and fall of the Nile, forty miles away.

Then there were the stones of which the shaft was made. Those at the top were obviously old stones that had been found in disorder and replaced with cement fairly recently; most of them had been broken and suggested nothing more than makeshift masonry. But commencing about eight below the ground level the courses were great carefully squared blocks so marvelously laid in place that from above the shaft looked almost like a square hole hewn in solid rock. I had myself lowered with one foot in the bucket, under pretext of examining the iron suction-pipe belonging to the gas-pump, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that I could trace the joints between the courses. Even at the corners I could not find a crack with the aid of a knife-blade.

Chu Chi Ying appeared to think we were bent on exploration there and then, and borrowing my fountain-pen hé drew a diagram of the well-shaft, showing that what we supposed to be the bottom should really be no more than a sharp turn, beyond which, according to his theory, the shaft continued downward at an angle of 25 degrees.

"Same angle inside Pylamid," he explained. "26 minutes 4 seconds." I determined on a long chance, and hunted a big rock to put in the well-bucket. Having found that, I stripped my clothes off, once again set one foot on the bucket and, clinging to the rope, told the others to let go suddenly when I gave the signal, and not to haul up again until I jerked the rope violently from below.

With my head just out of water, waiting to give the signal, I began to have an absurd dread of crocodiles! There was not one chance in a thousand billion that one of those reptiles could be down in there, but the suggestion became so strong that if I had waited another minute I would have funked it!

At any rate, I took a long breath, raised my left hand, and plunged under, holding my nose in my left hand, after the sponge-diver fashion, and that fact contributed to the genuine danger as soon as I touched bottom. For, as Chu Chi Ying had predicted, the bottom was not flat, but at an angle, and the bucket did not hit the stonework square, but edgewise, my feet thrusting it forward as I clung with one hand to the rope; so that in a second I was shooting away down into the dark again on a slippery, stone, underwater ramp, striking out with my left hand too late to catch the edge overhead.

I did not dare let go of rope or bucket, for the stone was so slippery that to scramble back up the ramp would have been impossible. On the other hand, I could not signal, as agreed on, without letting go; so there was nothing else for it but to slide on down into black darkness, hoping that Grim would take alarm and haul short before the end of the rope should slip over the beam, or my breath give out. At a pinch my supply of breath was good for about two minutes, but it seemed like two hours before the rope tightened with a jerk and I felt the strain as they started to try to haul me up again.

They hauled so hard that the half-inch manila rope felt like breaking. Nothing happened! I could see nothing—not even light up above me; but I could feel that the bucket was caught on the edge of a sharp stone corner where the ramp left off and the masonry fell away vertically. I kicked and struggled, but failed to shift it. The harder I kicked, the tighter it stuck, and every effort only lessened my remaining breath. I did not dare strain on the rope too hard, for my weight added to their pull might cut it asunder overhead, where it chafed against the stone corner. In desperation I took a longer chance than ever and forced my way downward until I could get the bucket in both hands and shake it loose.

By that time I was in no fit state to do what Narayan Singh would have termed scouting. The bucket came away suddenly and carried me upward feet-first, until my feet struck the sharp corner overhead and I had no more strength left for fending my body away from the stonework. I don't know what happened then exactly, only that I clung to the bucket so desperately that when I reached the surface half-unconscious, they could hardly pry my fingers loose from it. For about ten minutes I could not remember what had taken place below water, and was aware of nothing but the pain caused by being bruised and scraped against the rock. But Joan Angela's Tommy Atkins—his name

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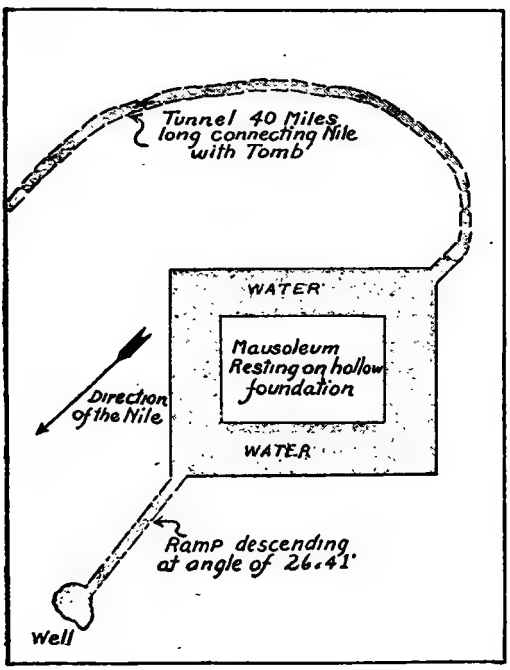
was really Atkins—had some oil that eased the pain considerably, and after a while I was able to describe what had happened.

"Chu Chi Ying is right," Grim commented.

"Mathlematics light, not Chu Chi Ying," the old fellow answered. "Look, see."

He set to work and drew another diagram, purporting to show the whole arrangement of the abyss that I had nearly been drowned in. According to his drawing, Khufu's tomb was a good-sized island, surrounded and covered by water, and with a cavern underneath it, full of water too, so that any one attempting to burrow up to it



from below would be swamped as soon as he pierced through the masonry floor.

"Too much water!" he said pleasantly, as if the knowledge gave him private satisfaction.

"Which way does the water flow in?" Grim demanded, and without a second's hesitation Chu Chi Ying connected up the Nile and the well on paper with one sweep of the pen. I have reproduced his drawing as well as I can remember it. Grim kept the original.

By that time it was no use trying to keep the secret from Atkins.

"'Struth!" he remarked, looking at the drawing over Grim's shoulder. "Hi thought as 'ow there was some uncommon partic'lar reason why these Gyppies was so set on gettin' rid o' me. So that's the gime! A bloomin' sepulcher! Say—see the blighter's cunnin' little stratagem? 'E set that well where it is, so's anybody 'ud waste ten years 'untin' for a tunnel leadin' from the well to the bloomin' Nile! Well I'll be —— if 'e ain't let the water in the other end an' taiken 'is tunnel a mile round in a circuit. D'yer s'pose that old chink's crazy, or does 'e know what 'e's crackin on about?"

Grim drew a copy of Chu Chi Ying's plan, and gave the copy to Atkins.

"Don't show that to any one," he said. "Eat it before you let any one get hold of it. Spend your time trying to trace that water-tunnel. If we can find that we can dig down and cut it; and once we've plugged it pumping out the water will be simply a question of time. Prospect around a bit, and put your six men on to digging, but pitch a marquee over the spot, and carefully spread the sand you take out. If you need lumber to shore up the hole with, pull down partitions from inside the huts. I'll give you that in writing so's to make you all square with Miss Leich."

WE DROVE away leaving Atkins well contented. To be trusted was the height of his ambition and he was shrewd enough to realize that his employer would reward him far more liberally for keeping the secret than any Egyptian would bribe him for betraying it.

We were much less contented than Atkins was, by the time we drew abreast of Gizeh, for a rifle-shot cracked out from among the sand-dunes and the bullet went through the top of Chu Chi Ying's black cap, which was close enough. Evidently orders had been given to prevent our making use of the little old Chinaman, on the "dead men tell no secrets" principle.

He was such a talkative, kindly little fellow that, although he professed not to be sure how much he had told to Zegloush, it was a fairly safe bet that he had told everything. Zegloush, or some one in his confidence, had almost certainly made notes, so that the Eyptians probably stood to lose less than nothing by the Chinaman's death, whereas he might not yet have had time to tell us all he knew.

Two servants, aided by our corps of spies, had restored our quarters to fair

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order before we got home, and nothing appeared to have been stolen. As a rule a mob tears down everything within reach. According to our servants' account, there had been a great disturbance in the street below, with crowds rushing backward and forward apparently aimlessly; and under cover of that a dozen well-dressed Egyptians forced our front door and rushed upstairs, turning the furniture upside down and breaking open cupboards, but finding nothing that contented them. They said nothing—did nothing, except hunt high and low, and it probably would have fared ill with Chu Chi Ying if they had caught him under our roof.

So Grim got busy and worked out a plan of defense, which included the cook's tasting in our presence every dish of food that he set before us. The fat, black rascal was prodigiously amused by that precaution; he was probably faithful, but certainly lazy like all the rest of them, and the knowledge that he had to take that risk three times a day did more to keep him on the *qui vive* than any amount of talking could have accomplished.

We might have called in the police, but that would have involved explanations that we did not care to make as yet. We decided to keep silence until after Joan Angela's arrival, and let her make whatever disposition she might please of her own property. The Government would have to be informed before anything practical could be done toward opening Khufu's tomb, but it was clearly her right to convey the information as and when she chose.

So we divided up our corps of spies into a bodyguard, allotting two to each of us, including Chu Chi Ying. They were unarmed, because of the stringent Egyptian law against carrying weapons—a law that, as in every country where it is enforced, works for the crook and against his victim. So they were hardly likely to show much fight in the event of attack; but what they did do was to supply each of us with three pairs of eyes, and to make it fairly safe to sleep for eight hours at a stretch.

Then we examined all the window-shutters, saw to the front-door bolts, barricaded the exit by way of the roof, and filled up everything that would hold water in readiness for an attempt at arson. Finally Grim collected all our pistols and locked them up in the safe.

"The next stunt brother Zegloush tries will be to tempt us to fire back at somebody," he explained. "If we *were* fools enough to fire, we'd all be arrested for using firearms; and there's probably influence enough at Zegloush's command to get us deported. If he can deport Joan Angela Leich he'll figure he has the game in his own hands."

We settled down at last for an evening indoors, with the idea of leaving the next move up to the enemy, and Grim took down from the shelf an old copy of Herodotus that he had picked up at a second-hand store. He reads Greek as easily as he could when he left school, which is more than most of us can do, and I shall probably be forgiven for not quoting in the original the paragraph that he finally lighted on after searching the volume for hours. But this was the gist of it:

"Listen!" he said quietly. "This is Herodotus describing his travels in Egypt. He is discussing the Great Pyramid and the theory current in his day that Khufu was buried inside it. He calls Khufu Cheops. 'But the priests told me that Cheops was really buried in a certain place entirely surrounded with water by reason of a conduit that connects it with the River Nile; and where that place is, they said that no man knoweth.'"

"Look, see! Look, see!" chuckled Chu Chi Ying in his corner.

CHAPTER XII

"—— fool thinkee money good for dead man makee plenty more mlistake."

GRIM was right as usual. Within the next ten days every trick was tried to tempt us to some act of violence for which we might be arrested. The house next door was an Egyptian's, who lived in part of it and let out the remainder. He turned some tenants out, and admitted others for our peculiar annoyance.

They threw things in through our windows, including burning cotton waste soaked in oil, and other things that stank. Some one with an air-rifle kept out of sight and potted at whomever he could see between our half-closed shutters. They invaded our roof and set alight to it, and when we went up in a body to extinguish the fire with water-buckets, brickbats and the air-rifle came into use again. It was tempting

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to hit back, but the temptation was too obvious, especially as Zegloush was known to stand particularly well with the police.

We did not all stay indoors all that time; but when we walked abroad it was in twos with our bodyguard on the watch, while the third man kept guard over Chu Chi Ying and the apartment. On two or three occasions our men gave us timely warning of an attempt to rush us in the street; and even Narayan Singh, who is a natural-born fighter, swallowed down his instincts and ran like a rabbit at the very sound of danger. The more we ran away, of course, the more impudent they grew, appreciating that we did not dare appeal to the authorities.

Nevertheless, what with our alertness and the loyalty of our colored gang they hardly did a thousand dollars' worth of damage. A second mob-rising that they tried to stir was nipped in the bud by the authorities, and a patrol of British soldiers in an armored lorry broke up the mob who were busy trying to break in our door on that occasion.

But it reached a point at which the only places where we could be safely seen were the verandas of the big hotels, the race-course and the clubs where no attack on us was possible without a clash with the authorities; so when my turn came to venture outdoors I put in more time smoking on the veranda of Shepheard's, for instance, than was good for a man of my bulk and active habit. And it was there, on Shepheard's veranda, where one half of transient Cairo sits and the other half passes by, that Zegloush Pasha caught sight of me and walked up as friendly as you please. He sat down in the basket-chair beside me and lighted a cigaret, with an air of amusement before he spoke.

"Well," he said at last, "that was a clever trick you played on me! Oh yes. Always I admire a man of strategy. Yes, always."

"It's a quality that you and your rascals seem to lack," I answered, and he laughed, but the laugh was superficial; he was one of those fat men who appear good-natured and sportsmanlike on the surface—who, in fact, deliberately cultivate that air; but it was less than skin-deep.

"You have been too clever," he confessed, with a wave of his cigaret and a mock bow. "The worst is that the Chinaman has doubtless told you all he knows. You probably know the value of the secret. That is fine for you, but bad for me! However, the game is not yours quite altogether yet. You realize that, of course?"

He paused for me to answer him; but some of our said-to-be-civilized conventions are not all they are cracked up to be and I chose the way of the untutored desert, saying nothing, moving not a muscle of my face.

"You see," he went on, with the air of a heavy uncle lecturing a spendthrift nephew, "you are a private individual, or perhaps I had better say a number of private individuals—a syndicate, if you prefer it. And you have a secret. But you are *vis-à-vis* to an organization. You have our political influence to bear in mind. It is true that you have a secret, but it is also true that your secret is valueless—to you, I mean—without the good will of your opponents. *Vous comprenez?*"

The way to keep out of an argument is not to say anything, so I did exactly that.

"Perhaps you do not understand. You are a stranger. Let me explain. If that secret were to become known to the British authorities, it would be worth nothing to anybody but to them. If there is no law under which they could commandeer everything, they would instantly make one. They would be very plausible about it, and the law would be made in the public interest—provided that by that you understand the British public—but they would make the law immediately—at once—and the proclamation would be issued with the ink still wet."

"Whereas, if you had your way?" I suggested.

"There are laws enough," he answered. "The treasure that we know of would find its way into channels where it would do the most good—both politically and to certain individuals—of whom you may just as well be one, my friend!"

I was not exactly aware of having reached a friendly basis yet; but let that pass.

"What's the great idea?" I asked him.

"Let us be men of business. Before all else, business. I have received a cablegram from a certain individual, who informs me that you represent the young woman who by the merest accident is the present owner of the property in which we are all interested. There are various ways of negotiating this matter. I might say to commence with that, as she obtained possession and title while Egypt was under military law,

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the civil courts can look into the title and, perhaps, upset it. I have been advised by eminent counsel that there are more improbable contingencies."

"Why don't you go to law then?" I demanded.

"Because, my dear sir, I have proposed that we first talk business. The purpose of business—its legitimate purpose—is to make money. Between men of business the question of price is the paramount consideration. Tell me your price, then, and I will see what can be done."

"My price what for?" I asked him bluntly.

"Well, sir, in the first place, I am suggesting to you that you might advise your principal—this already immensely wealthy young woman—that her legal title to the property in question is so insecure that she would serve her own interest best by accepting a reasonable figure—cash down, of course. And unquestionably, since such advice to her, reasonable though it is, would react to our advantage in certain contingencies, we would expect to compensate you in proportion. That is a sound business principle which my friends and I will gladly recognize."

Well, as a mining engineer, of course I have had that kind of proposition made to me—less crudely as a rule—at least a score of times. I said nothing, but may have lost control of my face muscles for a second, and he noticed that he had not scored very heavily. So he brought out the next tool from his kit.

"I am told you are a mining man," he resumed. "And of course we shall need a man with great experience of mining to help us in uncovering what we are after when the time comes, especially as it will be wise to work secretly. So that, if you were to elect to take your compensation in the form of a commission on the proceeds, we are ready to enter into an agreement with you along those lines, as well as to pay you a salary. Suppose we were to offer you five per cent, what would your idea be as to salary?"

I came back at him with a question—

"When would you propose to start digging?"

"Ah!" he answered. "Your salary as engineer would commence at once. But there are conditions to be considered. Political conditions. Egypt will not remain a British Protectorate much longer. When we have control of our own country it will be time enough to begin digging. We would have to wait for the auspicious moment, but you would receive your salary meanwhile, so why should that trouble you? And five per cent of that treasure will certainly amount to an enormous fortune for one individual. Come, let us agree!"

"I'll think it over," I answered.

"I can give you five minutes," he said, pulling out his watch.

"Suppose I don't give you my answer in five minutes?" I asked him.

I'm probably not good at disguising my opinion of a man and his proposals. He changed his tactics instantly and his manner with them, becoming as deliberately insolent as only an Egyptian can be.

"Miss Leich shall be told the truth, that you have been making overtures for a bribe," he answered. "You are simply a dishonest employee."

I stuck both fists in my pockets from force of habit, for I always do that when I firmly intend not to use them. There were two or three Egyptian officers in dark-blue uniforms keeping a watchful eye on us from the other end of the veranda, and though it was tempting to take and toss him into the street that was neither the time nor place. But he mistook the motion, jumped out of his chair, and backed away from me in a great hurry; maybe he had been to the movies and seen Americans using pistols at the least excuse.

As I produced no gun he grew pompously confident again, and went down the steps to the street like a dancing-master, nodding and waving his hand to the police officers with an air of "there you are, my lads; I've turned the trick for you!"

There is a row of shops opposite, and he entered one of them in order to observe the fun through the open door. As soon as he had disappeared inside one of the police officers—a handsome, swarthy fellow with a saucy up-turned mustache—crossed to my end of the veranda and accosted me politely enough.

"Pardon me," he said, speaking English perfectly. "Have you a pistol in your possession?"

"No."

"Any kind of weapon?"

"No."

"But three of us saw you threaten Zegloush Pasha only a minute ago!"

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"What do you suggest?" I asked him.

"That you submit to search, *effendi.*"

"By you?"

"Yes."

"All right," I said, "but in the presence of the U. S. Consul. I'll drive there with you, if you care to come."

"Would it not be simpler just to prove to me that you have no weapons?" he asked. "We could step into a room in the hotel here. It would hardly take a minute."

That sounded reasonable and he spoke with deliberate politeness as if anxious not to appear threatening or insulting. But it is an old game to plant a weapon on a man and then arrest him. Once under arrest, my individual activities in Egypt would be over for some time to come. However, Dame Fortune intervened. One of the assistants from the U. S. Legation drove by that minute, in a hired cab with a friend. I signaled him.

"Now," I said, "I'll let you search all you want to."

The officer tried to back down then for he saw that the game was up. But it seemed to me that it was not up. I insisted on being searched.

So we went into the manager's private office and all three police officers went through the farce of searching me, with Lynch, the legation assistant, looking on. I offered no explanation, so he invited me to lunch, and I drove away with him and his friend, to the disgust of Zegloush, whom I could see peering through the shop-door.

Lynch returned to the Legation after lunch threatening reprisals at police headquarters. The morning hardly seemed to have been wasted.

THAT night I took the train for Alexandria, to meet Mrs. Aintree's boat, Grim having agreed to let me have a try to spike her guns. It seemed well to call her off if that were possible. Any kind of interfering fool might tangle such a complex set of affairs as ours. Nevertheless, my going was a blunder; for all I did was to provide her with an idea that she used against us later.

I met her at the customs and managed to talk with her while her "husband" was arguing with the officials. They had caught him with contraband, so there was any amount of time; each piece had to be weighed, appraised and taxed, and the total extortion passed on by other officials a mile distant.

I explained to Mrs. Aintree that her new husband already had an establishment of wives, and pretended to assume that she would return home on the very next steamer. I even offered to secure accommodations for her.

She laughed.

"Supposing what you say is true, and I have yet to see it proved," she answered, "I am quite able to take care of myself, thank you! I have decided to make Egypt my home."

"Very well," I said, "we're old enemies, but the time is coming when you'll need help, Mrs. Aintree——"

"Madame Moustapha!" she corrected.

"So remember, Mrs. Aintree, that when you discover too late that the U. S. Legation can do nothing for you, my party will be glad to forget old enmities, simply as fellow-countrymen."

It was the unwisest break I ever made. I was talking to a woman who specialized in turning good intentions to her own advantage. She tapped me on the shoulder with the handle of a fly-switch.

"You're bound to be the eventual loser," she assured me. "I'll tell you why. Because you are selfish. You think only of your own pocket, whereas I know what true patriotism means. I am all the time serving others. This time I am serving Egypt, as you shall see!"

It's no use arguing with any one who attributes all the vices to you and concedes all the virtues to herself. I took the next train back to Cairo, expecting to be thoroughly laughed at by James Schuyler Grim.

However, he did not laugh. He had been hit by a rock thrown through the window and what with headache and my report of failure was looking on life more gloomily than I had ever known him. Mrs. Aintree was the last straw. He wished he was back in the Army—back chancing his neck in the desert country eastward of the Jordan where, if your life is in your hand, at all events it looks, feels and tastes of life instead of the fetid, hot streets that are hardly better than a noisy dream of death to a man who loves the open.

He threw himself back in an armchair and groveled in pessimism. According to him—and I think he was right at that—the only thing that kept Zegloush and his

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friends from shooting Atkins out in the desert and seizing Joan Angela's camp by force was fear, not of the courts—for they could fake a strong case for the lawyers easily—but of the small British coterie who still had the upper hand in government. They did not dare arouse the curiosity of those men by calling their attention to that strange well in the desert.

He, Grim, did not dare excite the curiosity of those men either. If information should reach them of the fabulous amount of treasure supposed to be hidden in Khufu's real tomb, that would be the end of Egypt's hope of independence for many a year to come; for, according to Grim, while that fit of blues was on him, no argument except the economic had the slightest force with governments the whole world over, and the real British reason for pulling out of Egypt was simply that it cost too much to stay there.

"And if they stay, there'll be rebellion. If they go, there'll be civil war. Whoever gets that treasure will raise —— with it. Yet it's there, within reach, and it can't be destroyed!"

He dissertated for an hour on local politics, describing the corruption that is part of the very Egyptian atmosphere. He sketched Egyptian history for three thousand years, describing how one conqueror after another has descended on the country, looted and debauched it, and has finally been swallowed and made part of Egypt, ready to lie down and grovel for the next invader.

"Whoever gets those millions can do nothing but raise —— with them!" he repeated.

He described the Fellaheen—described them in lurid terms—the seemingly passionless bulk of Egypt's population that can rise more swiftly than their mother Nile and wreak more ghastly devastation, without leaving any fertilizing silt as the Nile does by way of compensation after their frenzy has died down again to sullenness. The Fellaheen, who care for nothing but their bellies and their buffaloes, yet who can be whipped up into stark-mad, howling fanaticism by any religious hypocrite with politics up his sleeve—the voters-to-be of Egypt!

"There's —— ahead, whichever way you look!" Grim prophesied.

Then he harped on the string of Joan Angela's coming. She would be assassinated as she stepped ashore. Or, failing that, she would come to Cairo like a typhoon and, in the footsteps of every other moneyed hussy—to quote Grim again—she would try to run things to suit her own crazy notions, would insult the administration, make friends with the wrong people, put the new wine of her absurd ambition into Egypt's ancient bottle, and explode!

"She'll raise ——, I tell you. If there's one thing under heaven that's as sure as pay-day, it's that Joan Angela Leich is going to raise insatiable ——!"

Suppose she should get murdered in the streets of Cairo? Setting aside the shame that would be ours in consequence—the black, ingrowing shame of experienced men who have failed their employer—there would then be the United States to reckon with! The Legation would be forced to take it up, and that might lead to international friction.

"As if there weren't enough already!" he groaned.

You can't be a public servant—and the firm of Grim, Ramsden & Ross was that or nothing—without a sense of responsibility. And a sense of responsibility is all right as long as your liver is in first-class working order, but it becomes an overload as soon as pessimism creeps into your veins. Then you can't see the assets for considering the liabilities, and hope, which is driving power in the last analysis, grows cold, fails to expand, and quits. Grim could see all the possibilities of evil in that hour, and not one element of good.

He made the bald, dry statement that there was not one power in Europe that in the present state of the world's finances would not go to war for the chance of getting hold of Khufu's treasure. Furthermore, that the sum was so vast that no Egyptian politician would hesitate to plunge his country into anarchy in order to get hold of even part of it.

"And if Big Business learns of its existence, Lord help us all!" he grumbled.

He vowed that he could feel the crisis in the air. He swore that Zegloush and his party were only waiting for Joan Angela's arrival in order to play some trump card that would either win them title to the property or give them an excuse for cutting loose with all the forces at their disposal. I suggested that such forces as they might be able to control were only unarmed rabble,

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whereat he simply snorted with contempt, and quoted G. B. Shaw by the paragraph, word for word, swearing that the armor barons, typified by Undershaft and Lazarus, were making up for the business they lost when the Armistice was signed by running cargoes of arms in whole shiploads.

"And d'you suppose their governments are trying to prevent them?" he demanded. "Governments are preventing nothing that can bring in revenue!"

He cited instances; gave the names of ships that had been caught in the act of running arms into Egypt from Italy.

"D'you kid yourself they've caught them all?" he asked. "There are rifles and machine-guns cached all over the place."

He went on to assert that the British force still kept in Egypt was no more than an ably-managed bluff. He said there were not enough British troops there to hold the country for a week in the event of a serious uprising, and that all they would attempt to do would be to protect the Suez Canal and keep open the route to India.

"It's a perfect —— of a proposition!" he complained. "If we took a hundred tons of TNT and blew that Khufu's tomb to atoms, that wouldn't get us anywhere; the money would only be scattered, not destroyed! And it wouldn't be scattered far enough to accomplish anything. It would merely call attention to the stuff, and make it easier to fight for!"

I suggested we might take the bull by the horns and go straight to the Administration with the whole story before Joan Angela's arrival. I did not mean that, and I would have voted against it, but I wanted to switch his thoughts off on to another track and get him into a constructive mood. But I missed my aim.

"Do you suppose there is one man in the Administration who would dare to keep that secret to himself, or any three of them who could keep it between them?" he asked. "The fat 'ud be in the fire within five minutes!"

I asked him what he thought Joan Angela could do, in view of the law about antiquities.

"She can set —— loose!" he answered. "She can pull the trigger! Being a woman, she can choose the worst moment for doing it. That's all the difference she can make!"

Narayan Singh was sitting in a shop-door opposite, keeping watch on the spies who were watching us. There was nobody else to talk to, so I went upstairs and found Chu Chi Ying as happy as a lunatic among his instruments. He had drawn a great plane of the Pyramid, showing an extra chamber right in the middle, about halfway between those that were discovered long ago and the apex. He said that it, too, would be discovered one of these days, and I asked him how he knew that.

"Mathematics no can lie," he answered. "You no savvy. Me savvy."

He was obsessed by mathematics; but, according to him, as I understood his explanations, music and mathematics are the interpretation of law that governs the whole universe, and he who understands them owns the key to everything.

He had that undiscovered chamber in the Pyramid all drafted out to scale, showing its exact dimensions and the thickness of its walls. He knew the temperature inside it, or so he declared, saying that it would be found to be midway between the freezing and boiling points of water at that level.

"That one not yet disclovered. When disclovered, same shape—same size—same weight—same sortee stone—all same as Khufu's tomb!"

Nor was that all. He added that Khufu's real tomb would be found at exactly the same distance underground as this undiscovered chamber is above the Pyramid foundations.

"Is there anything in that undiscovered chamber?"

Instead of answering he wrote a string of figures on paper, added them, and set down the total.

"Anything in that?" he demanded.

I failed to understand him, so he laughed.

"Figures—Pylamid—same thing!" he explained. "Figures—paper—ink. Pylamid—stone. Same thing! Anything inside Pylamid? Same thing inside figures—inside music—nothing! Figures tell something. Music tell something. Pylamid tell something."

"According to you then," I said, "the Pyramid is a key to the discovery of Khufu's real tomb. Do you suppose he left any clue as to how that gold could be gotten out without discovery?"

Chu Chi Ying laughed and rubbed his hands together.

"Khufu think no can do," he answered. "Khufu allee same —— fool, makee mistake, not know evlything! —— fool thinkee

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money good for dead man makee plenty more mlistake. Wise man makee look, see. Savee?"

CHAPTER XIII

"Go to it, boys!"

WE WERE all ready for Joan Angela. Two days before her steamer was due word came in from Atkins out in the desert that he had succeeded in uncovering a section ten feet long of a tunnel built of stone slabs, whose direction corresponded with Chu Chi Ying's rough drawing. With that Grim's fit of pessimism left him.

We took no chances that could be foreseen, but engaged a suite of rooms for Joan Angela at a hotel in Alexandria and made no stipulation about keeping the reservation secret. We engaged them for a whole week, and paid the money in advance. Then we arranged for a private car to meet her at the docks and convey her straight to the station, where we had a compartment reserved on the Cairo Express in a different name altogether.

Expense being no argument, we repeated that trick in Cairo, reserving rooms for her at one of the best hotels, but secretly arranging for her to stay as the guest of a banker and his wife, who are friends of Grim's—a Mr. and Mrs. Norwood—people who could be absolutely trusted if it should become necessary to let them into the secret. That arrangement was all the easier to make because Joan Angela had already cabled in advance arranging for credit with the bank of which Norwood was managing director.

The next step was to arrange for Narayan Singh to act as her personal servant and body-guard. Sikhs, as a rule, do not take kindly to the more menial positions, being by race and religion stalwarts; but Narayan Singh volunteered his services, for his heart was in the game.

Our precautions were not likely to be good for more than a day or two at most, but there is more than a little in keeping the enemy guessing, if only for one day.

It was not likely that they would attempt to murder her at the first start off, because although that might leave them free to begin a lawsuit with her heirs to upset title to the land, it would certainly compel investigation. The secret of the treasure would then become known to the Administration, which would be the end of its value as far as Zegloush and party were concerned.

But it was perfectly certain that they would discover her whereabouts and start trouble within forty-eight hours at the most; so we laid our plans for action on the very day of her arrival in Cairo. The first move had to be absolutely secret, and Grim took charge of the arrangements for that.

So I met Joan Angela at the dock in Alexandria, and immensely enjoyed the jealousy of sundry British officers, all of whom had laid careful plans for entertaining her. She had come by way of Marseilles, and five days on the P & O had been plenty. She had a traveling companion with her, a Mrs. Watts whom I had never seen nor heard of, and they were even making love to that middle-aged, plain, hearty-looking female, in order to get the inside track. The unexpected swoop on Cairo took Joan Angela as well as the enamored officers entirely by surprize, for we had been careful in the wireless that we sent her to mention no more than that the suite had been reserved at the Alexandria hotel.

My job, until we reached Cairo, was to persuade Joan Angela and Mrs. Watts of the seriousness of the situation, and I might just as well have tried to persuade two gobs off a battle-wagon that the shore police should be considered with respect. It wasn't possible, and that was all about it. They would take nothing seriously; not even my warning that their lives were in danger. Exuberant animal spirits was the diagnosis, and I had no physic that would fit the case.

Joan Angela had reached her own conclusions; and since arguing with a woman who has done that always seems to me an even more futile and irritating waste of time than golf or tiddledywinks I gave it up at last, and laughed with them.

WE ARRIVED in Cairo long after dark, and there Grim met us, with Narayan Singh looming behind him like a jinnee out of the Arabian Nights. He had a great hired limousine in waiting, and took us straight to the hotel instead of to the Norwood's house. There Mrs. Watts was installed in the suite we had reserved for Joan Angela, and thither came Norwood presently, with his own private car, in a hurry to carry his guest away. But he had to wait, for Grim had worked a miracle.

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There were two men in Egypt at that moment who really ranked as statesmen, and nobody quite knew which of them held the reins in the absence of the high commissioner. Theoretically they were members of a council; but as there never yet was a theory that could be confined within four walls, nor a council that functioned as intended, those two men notoriously held control between them. Needless to say, they were perfectly aware of it. And if you think it is simple to persuade such men to come to you and hear your story, instead of your going to them and waiting on their convenience, just try it once and see. Grim had persuaded both those men to come to the hotel and listen to what we had to say; and said miracle gave birth to a young one *en route*, for they kept their appointment to the minute.

Simultaneously with them arrived Chu Chi Ying, blinking through horn-rimmed spectacles, holding great rolls of drawings in his hand, and bowing to everybody like one of those toy mandarins whose heads are balanced on a pendulum.

The financial member of a council always considers himself the most important. Like the other, the legal member, this one was a Scotsman—a short, full-tummied, gray, nearly bald man of about sixty, who bowed to Joan Angela, sat down with his hands folded one on top of the other on his lap, and studied Joan through his gold-rimmed spectacles. He was suspicious of her, having daughters of his own; nevertheless respectful, because in his estimation money was the life-blood of civilization.

The other man was rather tall and lean and canny-looking—decidedly inclined to be flirtatious in a noncommittal way; he somehow conveyed the impression of holding a power-of-attorney empowering him to flirt on behalf of the British nation, and of being careful not to let the nation go too far.

Like most middle-aged family-men they were half-scandalized and half-captured by Joan Angela's good looks. Nevertheless, first, last and all the time they were on their guard lest some trick might be played on the government they represented.

Grim opened the ball without preliminary. He told the whole story of the effort to form an incorporation in the U. S. in order to get title to the thousand acres in the Fayoum and exploit them under the egis of the U. S. Government. Then he described our adventure in rescuing Chu Chi Ying out of the empty house next door to that occupied by Zegloush Pasha.

"You broke the law there!" snapped the legal member, pursing up his lips.

Grim did not wait for any dissertation on the legal aspects of the situation, but promptly tackled Chu Chi Ying's deductions from the Pyramid, hitting only the high places, so to speak, and merely tracing the outline of how the calculations indicated that strange well in the desert, and how we had investigated it, and what we had discovered there.

Both members of the council looked incredulous. The legal member curled his lip, and the two men exchanged glances of derision that I suppose they thought we were too bat-blind to notice. Joan Angela was taking particular notice of everything, however, and said nothing.

Grim, who felt the coolness with which his statements were received, sat down and asked Chu Chi Ying to show his map and diagrams. Nothing could have pleased the old Chinaman better; he started to spread them out on the floor, perhaps thinking that the members of the Council would squat on the carpet beside him and be entertained. But there was nothing of that sort going to happen.

"We've all heard a very great deal of nonsense talked about the Great Pyramid," said the legal member. "There are theories and theories about it, but few of them are even plausible to my way of thinking. I have even gone so far as to read one or two books that have been published in order to prove that the Pyramid sets the date for the end of the world. All very ridiculous, I think. The Pyramid was a tomb—just a tomb and nothing else. As for that well in the desert—it may possibly be in some way connected with another tomb; but it seems to me that you have let yourselves be carried away by—ah—*cacoethes antiquarii*."

The financial member, with his hands still folded in his lap and his spectacles down on the end of his nose, nodded and smiled.

"*Cacoethes antiquarii* is a disease rather prevalent in Egypt. It's endemic," he said dryly.

"Do you think I have it?" asked Joan Angela quietly,

She was looking straight at the financial member; he could not avoid her eyes and I don't think he wanted to, although he

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found her silk stockings almost equally attractive.

"You seem to me to have come a very long way to investigate a mare's nest," he said with a little apologetic laugh.

"It's my property. Can anybody stop my digging there?" she asked.

"No," replied the legal member. "You may dig on your own land."

"And keep any treasure I find?"

"Ah! That's different. If you should discover a gold-mine, you could work it, I believe. There are so few mines here that I'm not familiar with the regulations. I can inquire, if you wish."

"I asked about treasure—gold or silver bullion—ornaments—coin—that kind of thing."

"That would not be yours. Treasure of that sort would have to be surrendered. If it had no particular intrinsic value you might be permitted to export portions of it, but not otherwise."

"What sort of man is this Zegloush Pasha?" she asked next, switching her line of attack. Both men were perfectly aware she was attacking. They made wry faces, and glanced at each other again.

"I advise you to have nothing whatever to do with him," said the financial member. "He is a politician of the meanest caliber, who enjoys an unsavory reputation. Enjoys it, I said."

"Would you prefer to deal with him or with me?" she asked instantly. "I could sell the property tonight to Zegloush and his friends. Would you like me to do that?"

"Why not sell it back to the Government?" suggested the legal member.

But the financial member shook his head.

"No funds!" he remarked with an air of finality.

"I propose to reach a decision this evening," said Joan Angela, and both members of the council raised their eyebrows in alarm. They were not used to dealing with young women who stood right up to them.

"All the way down from Alexandria," she continued, "I've been listening to a sermon from Mr. Ramsden about the danger if Zegloush should get hold of the treasure that's supposed to be in Khufu's tomb."

"Nothing could be worse!" said the financial member.

"Nothing!" agreed the other.

"Very well," said Joan Angela. "If you ask me not to sell to Zegloush Pasha——"

"I have advised you to have nothing whatever to do with Zegloush," said the financial member.

"Thank you for advice," Joan answered, "but you'll have to do more than advise. If you don't want me to sell——"

"Please don't," said the financial member.

"Very well!" she answered. "But who is to have that treasure, supposing it's there?"

"We would like time to consider that," said the legal member.

"We have until midnight," she answered sweetly.

"We could only discuss the question unofficially then."

"Go ahead," she answered. "Be as unofficial as you please. Who does that treasure rightfully belong to, if it's there?"

"To the Government," said the legal member.

"Which government?" she asked. "The Egyptian Administration?"

Both men hesitated palpably.

"The Egyptian Administration," said the lawyer, "is in a peculiar—I might say an unique position. You might say we are trustees, holding Egypt on behalf of her foreign creditors, who are of almost every race under the sun. That was the original condition of occupation, and the recently proclaimed protectorate has hardly changed that. So legally speaking I would have to answer your question, perhaps, in one way; ethically in another."

"You might dig out that treasure and hand it over to the Egyptian politicians to spend," she suggested. "Perhaps they would pay Egypt's debts with it."

"Perhaps!" the financial member remarked dryly.

"You have raised a fine point," said the legal member, setting the tips of his fingers together and crossing his legs. "Supposing the treasure to be there, and if we were to say for the sake of argument that it belongs to the latter-day Egyptians because a king who reigned four thousand years ago raised the money in the form of taxes, we would be assuming what we cannot prove. On the same basis you would have to assume that buried treasure discovered, say, in Mexico belonged exclusively to the descendants of the Aztecs. But suppose we listen first to you, Miss Leich; you must have had some definite idea before coming all this distance. We are speaking unofficially, remember."

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Joan Angela smiled, and I knew that minute she had made her mind up, and had only waited to be asked to state her terms.

"That money belongs to the whole world," she answered. Her voice was in the middle of the note, and her mind in the middle of the track. She was speaking from conviction, saying something that was as clear to her as twice two equals four.

"That's an original suggestion!" said the legal member.

"Original, very!" the other echoed.

"I've no objection to the British being trustees for it," Joan Angela went on. "I think they're entitled to be. Fifty years ago Egypt was a desert; everybody knows that. Today it's a rich country, and they've done precious little in return, except to swindle foreigners. If there really is treasure in Khufu's tomb, I reckon Egypt owes it to the world! How many billions do the Allies owe the U. S. A. for instance? And how much would Egypt's share be?"

"Original! Original! Then what do you propose?" asked the financial member.

"To dig! We'll soon know whether it's there or not. If it is, I want it to pay war debts. If you'll agree to that, all right. If not, I'll sell the land to the highest bidder and let the future take care of itself."

"My dear lady, we have no authority to treat with you in a matter of that kind!" exclaimed the legal member.

"You're men, aren't you?" she retorted. "If you don't agree, you can say so."

"We'll have to think it over."

"You've until midnight," she answered.

"But arrangements would have to be made to keep any such solution absolutely secret in order to avoid an uprising, and how can that be done, if, as you say, Zegloush and his party already know of the existence of the treasure?" objected the legal member.

"You can leave that to my gang," she answered. "They're a good gang. If they get any kind of square deal from you folks there's nobody on earth can beat them."

"You mean you want the British Government to have that money?" asked the financial member, looking at her in amazement over the top of his spectacles.

"For the payment of war debts and no other purpose!"

"We can't pledge the British Government, you know!"

"The British Government is pledged to the hilt!" she retorted. "They always pay when they've got it, and the U. S. Government holds their promissory notes."

The financial member sat back and chuckled. The legal member stared. Norwood, the banker, walked across the room and chose another chair. Grim turned around to hide a smile and avoided looking at me for fear I would wink at him. The financial and the legal member exchanged glances.

"Very well," said the financial member, rising. "In our private capacity, speaking strictly unofficially, we agree to do our best toward that solution, if the treasure is there."

Joan Angela gave him no opportunity to hedge on that.

"Good! Go to it, boys!" she said, smiling at Grim and me. "Good night, all! I won't keep Mr. Norwood waiting any longer."

CHAPTER XIV

"Please come quickly!"

JOAN ANGELA awfully resented having Narayan Singh dancing constant attendance on her. But Norwood and his wife were equally relieved, for it is no joke having a millionairess in your house with an Egyptian feud against her. Mrs. Watts occupied Joan's suite at the hotel, and Joan was spirited away near midnight in a closed car, but Zegloush knew before morning where she was staying. Narayan Singh, surveying the world at large before breakfast, recognized the same old street-cleaner spy and his assistant who had hitherto loafed in our street and reported our doings.

So when we called with a car to take her to view the property that move was known to the enemy at once. Luckily they did not know of our interview with two members of the council, both of whom had left by a back way after midnight, provided with perfect alibis by Grim, who leaves as little to Lady Luck as can be managed.

Have you ever seen a map of the Fayoum? It is an extraordinary section of flat country that was once a lake-bed. In places where water reaches it the soil is immensely fertile, and every yard of that is cultivated by the peasantry, who live in the usual stinking Egyptian villages among their hens and thriving insects. But the edge of the Fayoum is not at all regular, so that the desert crowds it much as a sand-beach holds back

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the sea, in curves and promontories, and whe ever for any reason the irrigation stops short, there the desert encroaches.

Joan Angela's thousand acres were unquestionable desert on a promontory jutting into the Fayoum, so that within a few miles there were half a dozen filthy villages, containing on the average two or three hundred inhabitants apiece, scattered southward and south-eastward in an uneven semicircle. Toward the southwest all was sand as far as the distant limestone hills.

We started with the road to ourselves, except for peasantry bringing in their market stuff, but we began to be followed before long by two of those gorgeously painted, brazenly trumpeting, sport-model cars in which the soul of the moneyed Egyptian delights. They kept behind us until we left the avenue of lebbakh-trees and the Pyramid, and turned off into the desert. Then, though, they put on speed and passed, taking a line at an angle to ours, sufficiently close to us as they went by to disclose the fact that the leading car was driven by Zegloush himself. He turned his head to grin in our direction, and was evidently pleased that we should recognize him.

Two of the men in the car behind were the identical police officers who had searched me in Shepheard's Hotel, although on this occasion they were not in uniform; they even went so far as to raise their hands in a sort of mock salute, and if anything in the world was obvious it was that they were bent on mischief and equally bent on our knowing that they, and none others, were responsible for what was going to happen.

As we had no weapons it would have been wise to return to Cairo, but Joan Angela would not hear of it. She said she had seen the War through on that very spot and that colored men were no more difficult to face than whites. You can't argue with a woman when she is arranging to pay the war debts of half the world, so forward we went, losing sight of all except the dust of those other cars long before we reached Joan's camp and found Atkins and his staff busy with their excavation.

They had uncovered about twenty feet of what looked like pavement, constructed of huge stone slabs, but it was much too wide to be a water-conduit, although Atkins swore he could hear water gurgling underneath. We slid down the sand to the bottom and listened, but could hear nothing, and Chu Chi Ying shook his head. He said it was too far to the southward by at least fifty yards, and not nearly deep enough below the desert level. Atkins had been trying to pry up one of the stones with the meager means at his disposal, but they must have weighed thirty or forty tons apiece.

On Chu Chi Ying's advice we staked out another sand-patch, seventy-five yards south, and told Atkins to pitch another marquee and dig there, promising to send him out a good gang with plenty of tools the next day. He went about pitching the marquee at once; but before his men had dragged the heavy canvas out from one of the wooden huts we learned what Zegloush and his friends had gone for.

Warning came from the direction of the distant villages—sudden tumult—several hundred men advancing, roaring like a tidal wave and throwing up the sand in handfuls as they rushed. Their dust was like a battle-squadron's smoke-screen. You could only see the sticks they carried brandishing above the cloud. But you could recognize their roar; there was no mistaking it—the very worst mob warcry that there is.

"La allah illa Allah! La allah illa Allah!"

Get those sullen, stolid *fellaheen* once shouting their blind creed in unison, and after that about the only argument worth using on them is machine-guns. There was no room for doubt as to which way they were coming, or what their business was; they were headed our way, and the business was to beat us with their long sticks into red mud that would by and by cockle in the heat and go blowing down-wind, leaving broken bones for the jackals to come and crack.

"I'll bet you he's been telling them," said Grim, "that we're here to lower the price of cotton in some ingenious way. Well—all aboard! Atkins, you and your gang had better climb on the running-board. We'll pull our freight out ahead of them."

That was perfectly sound tactics. It was even possible that by driving slowly and keeping well in sight of the mob we might draw them away from the camp and save the wooden buildings from destruction. We were going to need those buildings to house laborers. Grim took the wheel, and instead of retreating made a circuit in the mob's direction, merely keeping out of range of sticks and stones.

We headed eastward and they changed direction, swooping after us. If there had

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ever been a doubt of their intention, there was none now. The *fellah* would always rather kill than burn; centuries of the *kourbash* under the rule of conquerors have taught him that violence should be applied to persons; he will kill, when aroused, with a ferocity that surpasses the ravening of animals, but, unlike folk who are a fraction less materially minded, prefers not to destroy what he would rather tear down and steal at his leisure.

So it began to look like a mere amusing interlude, for they had no chance of catching us. We kept just sufficiently far ahead of them to draw them away from the camp. We were all laughing, when something went suddenly wrong with the engine; it heated up, the radiator boiled over, and we stopped. The mob yelled. Grim got the engine going again, but only for about a minute, and the second time we stopped the *fellaheen* realized that we were in serious difficulty. Atkins got down and jerked up the engine-cover, and Grim and I climbed out. The roar that went up from the Fellaheen about three hundred yards away was the voice of ancient Egypt, as merciless as her scorpions and her sun-baked sky.

"—— bad pigeon!" remarked Chu Chi Ying, folding his arms on the mid-ship seat philosophically.

There was no time to discover what the trouble was. Atkins lined up his little party of drilled automatons and told them to wrench sticks away from the mob. Grim and I got the tools out, and made shift to do our utmost with a hammer and a wrench, passing to Atkins the short iron bar that belonged to the jack, and I daresay that between us we might have done some damage before the end came—especially as Narayan Singh contrived to tear loose the iron foot-rest from the floor of the car; given any kind of weapon, he was sure to kill half a dozen men before they overwhelmed him. Joan Angela got out of the car and stood behind me.

"I'll take your hammer when you're down," she said quietly.

The mob was not fifty yards away, and a stone or two had come whizzing in our direction, when Zegloush and the two cars appeared from behind the dust-cloud, charging through the mob, knocking them right and left and getting between the raging fanatics and us. The plain-clothes police officers had revolvers and used them, firing in the air, and the others stood up, waving their arms, shouting, haranguing.

The mob checked sullenly—Egypt harking to the voice of her oppressors. But even so, nine or ten of them sprinted by and closed with us. We had our work cut out for a minute or two, for if you want to lay out the angry *fellah* without killing him you've a scuffle on your hands. But, exactly as the hot wind dies after stirring up the desert into dusty hell, the mob grew sullen and submissive—not reasonable, you understand; it simply quit—ceased shouting, ceased throwing up the sand, and stood looking on possessed by a sort of contemptuous curiosity, and reeking to high heaven from the sweat on its filthy cotton clothing. That's Egypt, sullen and fanatically fierce by turns—five thousand years of unmodified heredity, obedient to its robber-pasha, as it always has been, saying "Kismet! The pasha is the will of God!"

Within five minutes, lashed by the tongue of Zegloush and his friends, they were off back to their villages at a dog-trot, pursued by the nine or ten whom we had bruised with our improvised weapons, and Zegloush drove up, smiling like a papier-mâché Turk, to inquire whether any one was hurt. He introduced himself to Joan Angela.

"I am Zegloush Pasha. Are you Miss Leich? I am glad to make your acquaintance. You are fortunate to make mine! I have saved your life, and if you are wise you will save yourself some serious trouble by listening to me. Those friends of yours are not well-qualified to advise you, for they don't understand conditions. You have seen this morning what will happen if you try to excavate on that land that you are supposed to own. The *fellaheen* resent interference by foreigners. Besides, your title to that land is very insecure, to say the least of it, so the best thing you can do is to sell it to me, for I understand these villagers and can manage them. I will pay you a reasonable price."

He was radiantly confident—beaming with self-admiration—perfectly sure that we were now amenable—and sweating from his exhortation to the mob. The police in the car behind him were grinning like thieves who have gotten away with something.

"I'm not in the least afraid of your mob," Joan Angela answered.

Grim and I were working at the engine;

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all that was wrong was a broken water-connection, which was easy enough to fix, and we had plenty more water in a goat-skin bag.

"If you think you can frighten me summon them back!"

His *tarboosh* nearly fell off with astonishment.

"My mob? What do you mean—my mob?" he demanded.

"They came and went at your bidding," she answered.

His fat face darkened, and he showed his teeth in a venomous grin.

"Ah! You think you are very clever, Miss American Hig-liff*," he sneered. "However, you shall see!"

He drove off without another word, straight toward Cairo, putting on speed at risk to his expensive springs; and when we had fixed the broken joint with a piece of rubber piping, and had refilled the radiator, we returned to the camp, none of us, I think, feeling particularly confident except Joan Angela.

"If I die for it, I'll take care that that creature doesn't have his way," she said quietly.

But Grim took her in hand then, in the little hot camp-office that Atkins had converted into quarters for himself, and a lecture from Grim carries absolute conviction. He assured her that we were all ready to see the venture through, but that the life of every one of us, hers included, was worth less than a day's purchase unless she watched her step. He likened Egypt to a desert full of unseen cobras that strike without warning, and insisted above all else that she should take utmost advantage of Narayan Singh's willingness to be her body-guard.

That part rankled. She had no objection personally to Narayan Singh, but she was too well used to her own way to be shepherded by any one. The frankness and readiness to meet any one face to face that were her best possible protection in a civilized land were hardly a protection against folk who don't admire that kind of thing; but it was hard to make her see that.

Another difficulty was that Narayan Singh, being a Sikh, was well aware of the usual attitude of white toward the dark—whatever the dark man's creed or quality. He would not overassert himself. His own self-respect would prevent him from chancing a rebuke, and it was likely to be easy for her to give him the slip if that was her intention. Grim urged her to make it her business to keep the Sikh within sight or reach.

She promised, and she meant it, but habit is too hard to be overcome by a fifteen-minute lecture, even when Grim does the persuading, and I took Narayan Singh aside.

"If she won't listen, compel her!" I said. "I'm with you, if there's trouble afterwards."

He laughed.

"You and I are friends, *sahib*. I could take you by the throat and choke you into submission, if that were the only way, and no harm done. You could strike me, if I were mad and would not listen, and I would thank you for it afterwards. But with Miss Leich it is otherwise. She may strike me, if she wishes. If she gives an order, I shall obey. My life is at her service, I having pledged it. But I will lay no hand on her."

He was near enough right in his attitude to be proof against any argument of mine, and we had nobody else we could trust to protect her and who at the same time could act the part of household servant at the Norwoods' without exciting comment, so there was nothing for it but to trust Dame Fortune—an untrustworthy jade. We drove back to Cairo, and arrived there probably three hours later than Zegloush and his party, well along in the afternoon; and three hours is a lot of time to allow to a mischievous, ambitious rascal who has influence, besides being plenty long enough for the impression made by a lecture to wear off.

WE PICKED up Mrs. Watts at the hotel, and drove her and Joan Angela to the Norwoods' house, where we left Narayan Singh on guard. Then we returned to our own quarters to make arrangements for a labor gang, and Grim went off to interview the financial member of the council, to see whether he couldn't arrange for British soldiers to be quartered at the camp as a precaution against further interference by the villagers. So I was all alone when, just about six o'clock in the evening, there began to be another of those swiftly rising, savage riots for which Cairo was always famous—riots

*High-life—the Egyptian's idea of what Americans all live for.

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that explain why there is always at least one British regiment under arms in the Citadel.

It was a —— of a riot this time, as fierce as it was sudden—one of thirty that took place that year. The demagogs out of office were keeping the crowd stirred up, on the timeworn principle, or lack of it, that the political fishing is easiest in troubled waters. They called this particular thing a bread riot. Bread was the same price as usual, and the bakers were earning less than usual, but it suited somebody to have a riot, so the bakers had to suffer.

Suffer they did, for the military could not protect them all at a moment's notice. It had been known at headquarters for days past that a riot might break out at any time, but nobody had been able to foresee on whose helpless necks the fury of the mob would fall next. Any one who couldn't defend himself would do for a scapegoat. The mob was sore, and all the politicians had to do was to direct its insane anger at somebody. They picked on the bakers as the easiest mark in sight, an appeal to the belly being irresistible.

So up the streets the mob came howling, breaking in the bakers' windows and plundering on their way, with lorries full of soldiers and machine-guns in hot pursuit—all arms loaded with blank for the present, as the mob knew perfectly.

From out of my window I saw them drag one wretched Armenian baker from his cart, in which he had the loaves piled for his evening trade, beat him almost unconscious, drag him through his open shop door, and hurl him into his oven to bake to death. His screaming wife tried to drag the door open, so they hurled her in after him, and the British soldiers forced their way on the scene too late to do more than break a head or two with their rifle-butts and rescue two charred corpses. So far the soldiers had not fired a shot or used a bayonet, although most of them were bleeding. The butt and boot were the gist of their argument, and the mob was using anything within reach.

In the midst of all that came Narayan Singh, three steps at a stride upstairs, bursting in breathless. He said nothing, but his eyes looked wild, and he thrust forward a crumpled letter for me to read. There wasn't much he *could* say in the circumstances. The letter ran:

DEAR MISS LEICH:

Please pardon my approaching you. I am in dreadful trouble. I recently married in America a Pasha who now turns out to have an establishment of three wives, all under one roof. He has my money. I have lost my citizenship and am helpless. He is ill-treating me, and I don't know to whom to turn unless to you, in the hope that your generosity will send you to my aid. I am ill and unable to walk; I am not sure I have not been poisoned; but my tormentor is away from home at the moment, and if you could come and carry me away to some safe place I would be everlastingly grateful. The servants would admit a woman into the house, but they would be afraid to admit you if you had an escort, so *please* don't think of bringing any menfolk, for that would mean the end of me. Bring another woman if you like. This servant who, I think, is faithful, has orders to use my last remaining money to hire a carriage and bring you here, if you will come. *Please* come quickly. I know that if you don't I shall be dead within a day or so. If you will come I will tell you the whole secret of your land in the Fayoum. I am vomiting. I think it is arsenic. Oh do, please, come quickly! You knew me as—ISOBEL AINTREE.

It was blank paper, undated, no address.

"Did she go?" I demanded.

"*Sahib*, I——"

"Did she go alone?"

"Nay, I prevented that. She took the other *memsahib*. There came this black brute of a servant, looking more sly than a fox around the henyard, and I met him at the door. He gave me this letter for the *memsahib*, so I delivered it; and she, having read it in a moment, said that she would go, whereat I made ready to go with her. But she said no, there must be no man with her, and I, remembering your words, *sahib*, declared with much determination that she shall not go unaccompanied. Whereat she laughed and said the other *memsahib* shall go with her, for two women, said she, are the equal of one man at all times. And I still expostulating, she gave me a positive order, which I could not help but obey. She bade me bring this letter to you, *sahib*, saying that the letter itself explains all and that you will surely understand. What little else there was to do I did. I demanded of the driver whence he came and whither he was going. He mumbled words that I could not hear, until both *memsahibs* were inside the carriage, and then spat at me and drove on. The carriage had no name or number on it. So the two *memsahibs* are gone, and we are men without honor."

"Could you recognize the driver, or the servant who gave you the letter, if you saw them again?" I asked.

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"Try me, *sahib!* I have a score to settle with both of them!"

The telephone wasn't working. It almost never does when a mob cuts loose. There was no way of getting in touch with Grim, and there wasn't much sense in wasting twenty minutes going to the Norwoods' house. All I could think of was Will Tryon back there in California, faithful and straight as one of those great pine-trees, counting implicitly on me to send his young employer safely home again. I seemed to see Will Tryon's face between me and the wall whichever way I looked. It wasn't any use cursing old King Khufu and his treasure; that would cut no ice with Will Tryon. If I ever wanted to look that fellow in the face again I had got to do the right thing now, and do it quick.

I thought of the police. They were on riot duty. Whoever was left at headquarters would laugh if he were asked to find a missing woman out of hand, especially as the carriage in which she drove away had no number on it. I thought of government headquarters and the military, but exactly the same argument applied. They would find her certainly—dead possibly—within the week probably. I needed to find her now, within the hour.

I thought of hurrying to the residence of Zegloush Pasha and kicking in the door, for you get wild notions in such moments; but the certainty that he would have me arrested for taking part in the riot cut short the drift of that idea. The one paramount question was how to discover exactly where Joan Angela was gone; after that would be the time to take chances. But the streets were full of men about as reasonable as mad dogs. The police and military were only gradually getting the upper hand and driving folk within doors. There was the certainty of being turned over to the military —who lock you up first and ask questions tomorrow—if I should fall foul of Zegloush before knowing Joan Angela's whereabouts for certain. And Narayan Singh stood looking at me, miserably humble, self-condemned for having let her out of sight; there was not a chance of getting an idea from him.

I don't believe Joan Angela would have been alive today if it had not been for Chu Chi Ying. I would most likely have dashed out into the street with the Sikh at my heels, and Lord knows what form failure would have taken. Only I should have failed; that is outside the pale of argument. But as the Sikh and I stood there reading baffled irresolution in each other's eyes, old Chu Chi Ying came downstairs, smiling blandly, to ask what the noise in the street was all about.

He was the last man in the world you would naturally ask advice from in a crisis; but he could recognize a crisis as quickly as any one, and he stood still for about a minute in the doorway blinking at the two of us.

"No can do?" he asked, as if we had been "fat-fool first mates" in a quandary over some theoretical navigation question he had set for us.

I had to say something, ask something, confer with somebody, or bust. I daresay you know the feeling. It makes us take the most unlikely people into confidence.

"Did you tell your story to any one else than Zegloush Pasha?" I asked the old Chinaman.

He blinked, and seemed to swallow his Adam's apple.

"Heap plenty men," he answered.

"Where? In his house?"

He shook his head.

"This miserable Chinaman, he receive much hospitality at first. Many people paying compliments. Much how-de-do."

"But was all this in Zegloush Pasha's house? That's what I'm driving at."

He shook his head again.

"Taking this miserable Chinaman there afterwards. Much plomise before going. After get there, no can do!"

"All right. Where *was* the house where you did the talking?"

"In Clairo," he answered wrinkling his forehead.

"Could you find it again?"

"Mebbe."

"What sort of house was it?"

"Plivate house."

"Full? Empty? Big? Little? Where was it?"

"Yes," he answered, blinking and looking preternaturally wise.

"Infidel!" snarled Narayan Singh, taking a stride toward him. "I am a man of blood, as you have called me many times. I am bellicose. Answer the *sahib's* question!"

"Big house, little street, little doorway, full that time, empty by and by," said Chu Chi Ying, quickly, as if he were reeling off an exorcism.

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"Was there any one there whom you could recognize besides Zegloush?" I asked him.

"Zegloush heap plenty fliends."

"Would you know any of them again?"

He wrinkled his forehead in a sort of criss-cross question mark.

"Can find house. Can happen," he said doubtfully.

"Let's go!" said I. "Wrap him up and carry him, Narayan Singh!"

My brain was working at last. It balks like a mule at the wrong time always; but just once in so often I get the right idea, and then my thews and sinews take charge and something happens. Narayan Singh, whose greatest quality is swift obedience, snatched one of Grim's bedouin cloaks from a hook behind the door, caught the protesting Chinaman in its folds like a fish in a net, and picked him up as if he were a baby.

"Come on!"

We shot down-stairs and into the street as if the house were on fire, poor old Chu Chi Ying suffering uncomplainingly as his legs hit the corners, and at the foot of the stairs we cannoned into Grim.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Come on!" I answered.

So we took the sidewalk at a run together, and before we had gone half a block an officer called from a passing armored lorry to know what we had there, and where we were bound.

"Wounded man!" I shouted.

"All right," he answered. "Get indoors as quick as possible, and stay there."

The principle was to get all Europeans off the streets. We were stopped six times in half a mile by officers, some of whom insisted on seeing our "wounded man." But by that time Chi Chu Ying had the rules of the game down fine, and when an officer uncovered him he rolled his eyes, stuck out his tongue, and made such grimaces that he almost convinced me. Between times he directed us from street to street, and I told Grim briefly what had happened.

"It was my fault!" growled Narayan Singh, crushing Chu Chi Ying so savagely that the Chinaman yelled. "I will never forgive myself."

"If you talk rot I'll give you no chance to redeem yourself!" Grim retorted. "Have you never seen me make mistakes?"

That was the last word, so far as I know, that was ever exchanged between them on that subject, but it had a bearing on what followed, for a Sikh, like most other men, reacts gratefully to that kind of treatment.

The street fighting was by no means over, although most of the whites were safe indoors and the men in uniform were in such strong detachments that they were having matters their own way. But when the lorries passed the fighting resumed down the side streets behind them, for there's no time like a riot for paying off old scores, and in Egypt—Cairo especially—everybody has a grudge against almost everybody else. The ambulances were scooting like hawks along a hedgerow, and every once in a while a shot would ring out to remind the crowds that machine-guns were ready for business.

Narayan Singh would not let either of us carry the Chinaman. He liked the effort. He was doing penance. Chu Chi Ying weighed less than a hundred pounds, but did you ever try to carry that much in your arms for two miles at a good, sharp clip? The Sikh never set his burden down once, nor paused to shift it; and he seemed to be going as strong as ever when, under Chu Chi Ying's direction we turned down a narrow alley between high walls. There were trees peering over the top of the walls in places, but that was only in between high buildings, whose windows were small, high up, and barred with iron.

All down that street there was only one doorway, and that hardly more than a slit in the high wall. The wall was built of limestone, looted from ancient monuments —as likely as not from the casing of the Great Pyramid—and the door was of iron, set deep in a mortice, so that neither locks nor hinges were visible from outside.

"There! That door!" said Chu Chi Ying, and the Sikh set him on his feet at last.

Without a word Grim took to his heels and ran straight on down the alley at full pelt. I was just in time to see an Egyptian in *tarboosh* and patent-leather shoes disappear around the corner into another alley that crossed ours nearly at right angles, but as Grim can run about two yards to my one I did not join in the pursuit. Instead, I began examining the iron door, wondering how we could get inside it.

It was Narayan Singh, Sikh-fashion observing everything with hardly a motion of his head, who saw and pounced on incontestible evidence that we had come to the

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right place. He picked up a piece of extremely fine linen about an inch and a half square that lay between the cobble-stones to one side of the door, and passed it to me.

"Does the *sahib* recognize that?"

It had been torn from Joan Angela Leich's handkerchief. There was no doubt of it. It bore the initials J. A. L. done in a peculiar style of needlework. The linen might have come from almost any expensive store, but that peculiar embroidery was done by a Piute Indian at only one place in the world. Nor had the scrap of linen been wrenched off in a scuffle. It was torn off square deliberately.

CHAPTER XV

"Speak, O man of swift decisions!"

GRIM came back dragging the Egyptian with him—a sulky well-dressed, pimply-faced, obvious debauchee, who swore by Allah he would have Grim punished. He denied ever having been through that iron door; denied even knowing whose house it belonged to. But Chu Chi Ying identified him as one of the men who had been in the house when he first told his story of Khufu's real tomb to a committee of Zegloush Pasha's friends.

"I never saw that Japanese in my whole life!" the Egyptian protested.

"Kill um dead!" suggested our Chinese friend.

Narayan Singh went in search of a crowbar, but might as well have looked for diamonds.

Grim offered to let the Egyptian go, if he would tell where Joan Angela Leich and Mrs. Watts were at that minute.

"Hasn't there been a riot?" he retorted. "What stupidity to ask me! Rioters have certainly seized them and carried them off! *Quelle bêtise! Je m'en fiche de vos dames américaines.* Women who accept invitations to ride in strange carriages deserve whatever happens to them!"

That was not convincing. Narayan Singh, returning from a fruitless hunt, tried other tactics.

"Do you want to die, Egyptian?" he demanded.

"Dog of an Indian!"

The Sikh grinned. He dared kill any one that minute. But Grim shook his head, and then turned suddenly. Back at the corner of the alley behind us an armored lorry had come to a standstill while its youthful officer made up his mind which street to patrol next. Grim passed the Egyptian to me to hold, and again went off at a run. In a minute he was talking to the officer. In another minute the officer and ten privates had climbed down from the lorry, leaving only two men in charge, and were following Grim in our direction.

"Miss Leich and Mrs. Watts are in here—through that door?" asked the officer, nodding to me; and I recognized him for one of the gallants who had been so disappointed when I carried Joan Angela off from under his guns, so to speak, in Alexandria. He was a clean young fellow, with a campaign scar across his cheek.

"I don't dare break that door down. By ——, you know, they'd break *me* for it."

"If the door were open would you follow through?" Grim asked him.

"I'll set a guard over it, if you like, while we pass the buck to somebody and get permission to break in."

But I decided on a swifter method. I took that Egyptian by the throat and hurled him against the iron door backward so hard that some of his false teeth fell out.

"You open that," I said, "or I'll kick you through it!"

I meant it. He knew I meant it. If he hadn't the means of opening that door, so much the worse for him. He hesitated, so I gave him another dose of the same medicine, and he made up what was left of his mind that of two evils his Egyptian friends were probably less dangerous.

"That is enough!" he stammered. "I open presently! Just wait!"

I conceded him one minute. He took a clasp-knife from his pocket and rapped out a signal on the iron. It was repeated after a moment from within. He rapped out another signal. We heard a heavy bar being shifted, and the door swung open about six inches, which was plenty in the circumstances. The lot of us went through like a winning football team, into a garden full of grapes and gorgeous flowers with date-palms spaced at intervals. A Nubian servant slammed the door behind us, and we took him along, so as to leave no enemy at our rear.

A big, old-fashioned house opened into the garden, and there was no trouble about breaking into that, for the front door stood

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ajar and the Nubian who came running from within to ask our business arrived too late. We locked him, the gate-keeper, and the Egyptian who had given the signal that admitted us, into an empty closet at the end of the hall, and charged upstairs with Chu Chi Ying in our midst; he told us that the room where he had told his story was on the first floor.

We made noise enough, of course, to wake the dead, for Tommy Atkins in ammunition boots and armed with a rifle trips on no light fantastic toe; so it was hardly surprizing that we found the door that Chu Chi Ying indicated locked on the inside. However, having broken all the laws of Egypt already we did not hesitate to repeat on one of them, and the door went down under the thrust of butts and shoulders.

A strange scene confronted us then. A big, old-fashioned sort of drawing-room with red plush furniture, and a plain deal table in the midst. Gilt mirrors everywhere. Eleven Egyptians, most of them with "political" stomachs, rose out of easy chairs and stood looking terrified. Three men at the deal table, one of whom was Zegloush, remained seated, too frightened to move, I think.

"I *thought* you'd be here presently!" said Joan Angela's voice. "Did you find my bit of handkerchief?"

She and Mrs. Watts were on two small chairs at one end of the room. Their ankles were bound fast to the chair-legs and their hands lashed behind the bent-wood backs. In front of them, on a tray on the floor, was an ordinary woman's curling-iron being heated in an alcohol lamp; why nobody had put that out of sight when they heard us coming is beyond imagination to explain, unless fright paralyzed them.

"Oh, hello, Captain Naylor! How nice meeting you again:"

Her voice was as usual, without a tremor in it. She looked calm, but Mrs. Watts was deadly pale and very nearly fainting. Narayan Singh was first across the room, untying their hands and feet; the rest of us took precautions to prevent a stampede through the door.

"Have they used that hot iron? Have you suffered harm, *memsahib?*" he asked.

She laughed and shook her head.

"I owe you an apology, Narayan Singh," I heard her say.

I couldn't hear what he answered; he growled into his beard, and I was holding by the throat a pasha or a bey or somebody who imagined he could win the door by struggling. Captain Naylor was going the rounds disarming everybody. Three had repeating pistols, and every single pasha of them had a knuckle-duster; one of them tried his on the British soldier who was holding him, and screamed loudly.

Grim fixed up the door more or less, and stood with his back against it.

"What next, Naylor?" he asked.

"Lord knows!" laughed Naylor, who had got around to where the women were and was resuming the flirtation left off on the steamer. He was a merry-minded little man. "It's up to you, old top."

He walked over to the table.

"What's this?" he asked, picking up a typewritten document.

"That's the title deed they wanted me to sign," said Joan Angela. "I was to be tortured until I signed it, and killed afterward. Did you catch that man who went out? He was on his way to order a cart. The idea was to dump the remains of Mrs. Watts and me in an empty lot some time tonight and blame it on the rioters!"

"Yes, we caught him," answered Grim, beginning to write down the names of prisoners.

They were not asked their names, but identified with indignity from the contents of their pockets, Grim and I witnessing. It was Narayan Singh who thought of what to do next, plucking Grim's sleeve.

"Speak, O man of swift decisions!"

"*Sahib*, leave me in this room alone with all these!"

"He'd better have help, hadn't he?" suggested Naylor.

Grim nodded, and Joan Angela looked scared.

"D'you mean you're going to kill them all?" she demanded.

"Oh Lord, no!" answered Naylor.

"Pile your arms outside in the hall, you men!"

The Tommies filed out grinning hugely. They left their tunics outside, too, and came back rolling up their shirt sleeves.

"Now understand, men," said Naylor. "This is strictly unofficial. Nobody's got to be killed. You've seen ladies put to gross indignity, and you'll govern yourselves accordingly. It's personal between

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you and these Egyptians. You may fall out for fifteen minutes. Shall the rest of us go outside?" he suggested pleasantly.

So we filed out, and Narayan Singh reset the broken door in place behind us. We carried all the rifles and tunics down-stairs, just as a precaution in case some more than usually active bey or pasha should contrive to escape through the broken door. Then we went out into the garden to hear music. It was good music, of the sort that Egyptians understand; a little wild for white ears, and without much melody, but with a sort of rhythm to it that was fascinating in its way. Some of the high notes seemed off key, and in common with nearly all Oriental music, if it possessed harmony it was of a nature unintelligible to the untaught ear. But it fairly pulsed with sounds like drum-beats; that part was comprehensible.

"You see, Joan Angela," said Grim, laughing aloud at a more than ordinarily high falsetto screech that skirled through a broken window-pane, "if we arrested them the secret would be out, whereas if they go and complain about this we've still got perfect evidence against them, and all their names. They're getting thrashed, and that's good for them. They'll be afraid to complain, or to make any further trouble."

"Besides, you know, Miss Leich," said Naylor, "those men of mine put up with no end of dog's work today—being hit without hitting back, and all that kind of thing. You wouldn't rob them of an opportunity like this?"

"I'm only sorry Mrs. Aintree isn't in the room. That might make her realize," she answered.

But I did not believe that. I don't believe it yet. She would merely have said that those Egyptians were suffering for their own sins, which of course was true, and would have flattered herself that she was the instrument of Providence.

There began to be more or less silence upstairs—the tune petered out to a frazzled end in fact—before the expiration of the fifteen minutes, so Naylor blew his whistle and the soldiers came down one by one, examining torn shirts, and feeling at bruises. They put on their tunics, picked up their rifles, and fell in in front of Naylor, not grinning, but with the air of men who have put through an important job.

"Now, have any of you helped yourselves?" asked Naylor. "If any man has taken anything I'll look the other way while he gets rid of it. Looting and justice don't go together, you know."

He turned his back deliberately, but none of them made a move.

"All right," he said. "Fall in then. 'Tshun! Stand at ease! Now, I want no talking about this. If you're asked any questions, refer the questioner to me and answer nothing. You've done a white man's job. It was a great privilege. Now do the right thing by your officer and don't let your tongues get me into trouble. 'Tshun! Back to the lorry now. Forward— March!"

Narayan Singh came last downstairs. He might have been coming from saying his prayers in a temple.

"Such creatures should be slain and thrown to the crows," he remarked, "but we did the next best thing. What now, *sahibs?*"

CHAPTER XVI

"Cleopatra, who would have liked to sell Egypt's soul again."

I DON'T know what the authorities did about Zegloush and his accomplices. Grim took that list of names to headquarters, and we were given permission to go ahead as secretly as possible with the excavation. It is rather easy to guess what happened, however, without shooting wide of the probabilities.

Nothing is more improbable, for instance, than that Zegloush or any of that gang we caught in the up-stairs room was in a fit condition to go about for several days. And, as they were not arrested, some one in the confidence of the authorities undoubtedly paid all of them a visit. It is likely that, viper-fashion, they showed their fangs and threatened to make public what they knew if they should be prosecuted. Having plenty of trouble on their hands, the authorities preferred to avoid a prosecution; but undoubtedly they threatened in return to prosecute and hang the lot if they let so much as a bleat escape them regarding the supposititious Khufu treasure.

Nobody knew exactly, or even nearly, when independence would be granted, and there was always the possibility that it might come sooner than anticipated; Zegloush stood to gain by keeping the

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secret. If at the same time he could prevent the existence of treasure from being proved, and keep the treasure underground until after the British let go the reins, there was always a chance that he and his gang might get possession of it. Joan Angela's title to the land would be worth about ten cents if ever Zegloush should be in a position to pull the political wires.

Zegloush and his intimates could still reach channels through which they stirred up the mob, for word of mouth is much more difficult to control than written or printed communications.

So, although we took a gang to Joan Angela's camp, and the authorities quartered an officer and twenty men in the huts for our protection the neighboring villagers became more and more threatening, and there even began to be half-veiled hints in the local Arab press to the effect that foreigners were desecrating ancient monuments and planning to loot the country before the Egyptians themselves could get control.

We weren't out of the wood. Anything at all, against any foreigner, was good propaganda just at that time. Any violent invective that could arouse the Fellaheen and set the whole country by the ears was regarded by the would-be statesmen as sound policy. And nothing was more certain than that the first whisper that we had unearthed enormous treasure would plunge the whole country into civil war; for every political party, and almost every individual, to say nothing of the foreign bankers who held Egyptian promises to pay, would stop short of nothing in order to get a share of it.

The solution was the idea of Grim and Chu Chi Ying between them. The engineering end of it was mine. The ticklish work was done by Captain Naylor and the same identical Tommies who had helped Narayan Singh administer "field punishment" that afternoon. Joan Angela paid the expenses, and provided the successful camouflage, by granting an interview at the right time to the reporters of several newspapers, including representatives of all the Arab press, who jeered at her in their columns afterward and mentioned her as "the modern Cleopatra, who would have liked to sell Egypt's soul again, but failed." However, Joan Angela failed in nothing, not even in the fun.

Our task was made at the same time more easy and more difficult by the circumstance that the two members of the council who were in the secret still regarded it as a burlesque. They seemed to think there was perhaps one-tenth of one per cent. of a grain of truth underlying our delusion—just about sufficient to set Egypt by the ears, and therefore something to be handled circumspectly. They were all in favor of the trick that Grim proposed to play, but deadly in earnest in insisting that there the whole thing should stop. We had to deceive them, as well as the Egyptians.

The main difficulty was to waste sufficient time, for we needed weeks, not days, to tackle the real job. We had to invent labor trouble, broken derricks, sliding sand and a dozen other expedients to explain why it took so long to uncover the masonry that Atkins had come on when he first began prospecting. We knew that was not the right direction to explore in, but the longer we could keep the rest of the world believing that the treasure was supposed to lie underneath those slabs, the more time we had for real prospecting. So we did things that would have made a striking bricklayer weep for very shame at such loafing and stupidity. Whenever we got enough sand cleared away in order to up-end one of those thirty-ton slabs, either a rope or a chain or a sheer-leg was sure to give way. Or, failing one of those things, all the sand would come sliding down the bank and provide another three or four days' job of digging.

Meanwhile, we pulled down one of the biggest huts and reerected it on a spot that Chu Chi Ying indicated after making careful measurements; and inside the hut, using a picked gang in eight-hour shifts, who carried the sand away quite a distance in buckets on their heads, we dug in real earnest. At the end of five days we had uncovered thirty feet of a masonry tunnel that was built as scientifically and substantially as the Pyramid itself. We were lucky enough, or else Chu Chi Ying was clever enough with his calculations, to descend on it at a point where it began to curve in order to lead toward the Nile.

During the whole of the time that the digging was going on there was trouble with the near-by villagers, and there was even some talk of reenforcing our small contingent of soldiers, who had to shoot over the heads of raiding parties sometimes as often

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as three or four times a day. The shooting was explained in Cairo as "rifle practise."

We had to blast to get into that tunnel we had found. The cement that old Khufu's engineers had used was of such good quality that they had been able to spread it thinner than a sheet of writing paper, and it had set so that the tunnel was practically one solid piece of stone, forty miles long, without a break or a crack in it anywhere.

Nor was that the least amazing part of it; for it was twenty-one feet deep, inside diameter, and at the time when we broke in the upper nine and a half feet were out of water. The rise and fall of the Nile at that point is about sixteen feet, and taking the level of the river at that time into consideration it was obvious that there would always be a considerable air-space all along the tunnel—room, for instance, for a small boat.

So the two chief mysteries now were: Why should Khufu have constructed such an enormous tunnel, and: How had his engineers prevented it from silting up with mud in the course of four thousand years. Even supposing that it flowed in a wide loop and had an outlet back into the Nile at some point lower down, it should have silted none-the-less, for the Nile carries mud in solution until the water looks like pea-soup, and the mud settles so fast that not only has the whole Nile delta been formed by it, but the river-bed itself is considerably higher than it was in Pharoah's day.

The first mystery was solved by Grim, who produced some books on ancient Egypt. According to them there was some connection in the ancient Egyptian mind between dying and going over water—so much so that the funeral processions of wealthy folk were all made in boats. The corpse in its magnificent sarcophagus was taken by boat across a lake, followed by all the mourners.

Apparently Khufu's water journey had been postponed; at any rate no record of it has ever been discovered on any of the walls on which it was customary to depict the personal history of every king from the time of his ascending the throne until his death. Moreover, there was that account given by Herodotus to bear in mind. Herodotus came on the scene more than a thousand years after the event, but according to him the legend in this day was definite, that Khufu had been buried in a place unknown that was connected by a tunnel with the Nile.

So it seemed probable that, in order to avoid too much publicity, and the consequent discovery of his tomb by thieves, Khufu had caused the boat-ride to be postponed until after his interment. To a man who could conceive such a gigantic hoax as the construction of the Pyramid, with its three million cubic yards of fitted and cemented masonry, it can have hardly called for much additional effort of imagination to consider himself quite capable of taking that ferry-ride alone, without the aid of priests and their assistants. So what could be more plausible than that he should make provision for it by constructing his tunnel high enough for the upper part to be above Nile-level and so leave room for a boat? Whether that guess was right or not, we received some circumstantial confirmation of it later.

It was not long before we solved the other problem, of how the tunnel had been kept clear of mud. But first we had to discover where the intake from the Nile might be, and Chu Chi Ying could give us no pointers about that. He said there were no measurements in the Pyramid on which to base calculations for that problem; so we had to go at it from where we were and hunt like rats in a drain.

We procured one of those flat-bottomed duck punts with a small motor in the stern, in which expensive Egyptians like to fool about among the reeds while their hired men catch ducks in a net. And we blasted and broke the tunnel roof until the hole was big enough to lower the boat through without filling. An acetylene torch, and some candles in case the acetylene gave out, four good life-preservers and some long poles completed the outfit, and we were ready. The boat would hold four without too much crowding, and Joan Angela, Grim, Captain Naylor and I climbed in. Nothing less than a warrant for her arrest would have kept Joan Angela from coming with us.

WE PUSHED off slowly, using the poles at first, the tunnel echoing to every sound we made so that we could hardly hear each other speak, and it was by that means that we discovered how the tunnel had been kept free from silt; for the poles went down into a foot or so of

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mud and then touched rock, except in places. At intervals of about twenty yards there were wide gaps in the floor where the poles went down so deep into the mud that we could hardly pull them out again. The floor on either side of those gaps was at different levels, that farthest away from the Nile being always the higher of the two by at least two feet; and as far as we could determine by groping, those were stone pockets whose throats faced the flow of water and caught the silt. The constant repetition of that arrangement for forty miles, and the almost immeasureably slow current, explained why the water reached the well in a condition fit for drinking without being filtered.

We poled perhaps for half a mile before starting up the motor. There was a smell of wet stone, but the air was not too stale to breathe. There was a certain amount of slime on the sides of the tunnel, but that sort of stuff apparently needs daylight to grow rankly, and you could usually see the joints in the masonry, although you couldn't have thrust a knife-blade in between them anywhere.

Crocodiles are supposed to have been exterminated from the lower reaches of the Nile, but not so. There were monsters in there—great, blind brutes whose scales were almost white, and who must have had quantities of fish to live on. There was a ledge a little more than a foot wide along each side of the tunnel about six inches below the present water-level, and the filthy brutes dropped off those ledges in dozens as we sent the rays of the acetylene torch along in front of us. Scales had grown over their eyes, but they were not quite insensitive to light. Their grayness made you think of lepers.

There was no other life down there but crocodiles and the fish, whose presence had to be presumed. Once we got the motor going and its roar turned the tunnel into the very mother of all noise we saw not another living thing, but plowed ahead six miles an hour, leaving a wake behind us that washed the tunnel sides and added its own swishing to the tumult. It was useless trying to speak. Atkins and Chu Chi Ying told us afterward that they could hear the din of our progress until we reached the very end, and that they knew the instant we started back.

There was nothing to mark the distance, and no way of judging it except by time; even so, we did not know the exact speed of the boat, and the thought of a collision with submerged rock and an upset among those sightless monsters was no encouragement to us to speed. We throttled the engine down after a while to the slowest rate at which it would keep on turning, and stopped it altogether, using the poles again whenever we reached a bend—which was about once in every mile or so.

Sometimes there were sharp turns, twice repeated, as if the tunnel engineers had had to avoid tough rock; or they may have been designed as an added precaution against silt. The nearer we approached the Nile the more frequent those turns were, and the deeper the silt became in the pockets; we lost all sense of direction after a while and, strangely enough the sensation became one of going down-hill, as if we were descending into the very bowels of the earth, whereas, as a matter of fact, allowing for sand-dunes and ridges, we were at no point more than a hundred feet below the surface.

There is nothing like darkness to make a journey seem interminable, and it felt as if we had been a whole day, instead of six hours, underground when we came to the intake at last and the tunnel opened out into a vast stone tank, whose roof was made of monoliths supported on upright pillars eight feet thick that rose out of the water in a long row down the center.

This was another exhibition of Khufu's royal extravagance; not a stone in that great tank can have weighed less than thirty tons, and some of them—those in the roof particularly—must have weighed two or three hundred tons apiece. And so perfect was the masonry, so accurate the joining and the geometrical design, that not one stone had shifted from its place in all those thousands of years. The place was as perfect as on the day it was built and sealed up.

But it was all right to admire the engineering; what we had to discover was some way of reaching the surface, or at least of identifying the spot, so that we might return and continue operations from above. We could hear the Nile, sucking and swishing and gurgling, but as the intake was underwater we could not discover its arrangement, or even guess how Khufu's engineers had solved the problem of silt and rubbish removal at that point. Obviously there

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was some sort of grating, and it was probably of stone, with spaces wide enough to admit small crocodiles but too close together to let the grown ones out again. They were certainly wide enough apart to let big fish swim through, else what did the crocodiles eat? But they were invisible; and the bottom just there was fathomless; we drove one pole down so far into the mud that we could not recover it, and nearly upset the duck-punt in the attempt.

It was Joan Angela who thought of the solution. She had been reading about the Pyramid, and studying the religions and superstitions of ancient Egypt more than the rest of us.

"If Khufu planned to make his journey after death along this waterway, how did he propose to escape at this end? He must have left an exit," she said. "Do you recall how, when Al-Mahmoun's men forced an entrance into the Pyramid, they had almost given up hope when they heard a stone falling in some hollow place inside? There may be some such stone left here, that will fall if it gets a shock."

We examined the end of the wall nearest to the Nile, but there was no sign there of any loose stone, or of a stone that could be pried loose with anything less than dynamite.

"Wouldn't he plan to emerge upward?" Joan Angela suggested.

That being probable—for all men seem to think of heaven as being somewhere overhead, although where the Australians and Chinese would go when they die in that case is unpleasant to imagine—we turned the acetylene light on the roof. By standing up in the boat we could very nearly touch the roof with our fingers, so that as we shifted the boat about and used the torch systematically we were able to scrutinize every inch of it. Then we saw what we had not seen before—that the middle pillar of all was only two feet thick at the top, and was cut in the form of steps all the way down to the water on the side nearest the Nile, at which point it was eight feet thick like all the others.

And at about the point where the roof-stones would have rested on that pillar if it had been of the same thickness as the rest there was a square of limestone set between the granite. It was set flush, and finished off so smoothly that the difference in color was the only clue to it, and although apparently it was not fastened in place with cement the joints were so absolutely perfect that friction should have been enough to hold it in place for centuries.

"I'll bet it's dropped in place from overhead and weighs at least two tons," said Grim without enthusiasm.

"I'll bet!" Joan Angela answered. "Give me that pole. Now, push the boat clear."

She shoved against the stone, but nothing happened, except that the boat shot all over the place and she nearly fell into the water.

"Somebody stronger take a hand," she suggested. So I took the pole, and we shifted the boat so that Grim and Naylor could hold its stern against the next pillar. I shoved so hard that what with my weight and the pressure the bow all but went under, and suddenly the limestone moved—not more than a fraction of an inch, but enough to set the end of the wet pole slipping on its smooth surface. I tried to recover my balance, but Grim's hands slipped on the rock he was clinging to and I went overboard at the same instant that the limestone block gave up its four-thousand-year grip on the granite and plunged down into the tank alongside me!

I was thinking of hungry crocodiles, and I scrambled out as if the underworld were after me. Above us gaped a four-square black hole, just big enough for one man at a time to pass through comfortably —King Khufu's gate to heaven!

I went up first and helped Joan Angela through after me. The others followed with the torch and candles. We were in an oblong chamber, thirty feet by twenty, lined with porphyry. There were no beams visible above us, and the porphyry ceiling, twenty-eight feet high—as we found out afterwards—glowed as smoothly as the hand-rubbed floor and walls. It was a piece of absolutely perfect workmanship, and empty. There was not even dust, and the air was almost impossible to breathe.

But at one end—that nearest the Nile—the eastern end that is—there was a perfect Egyptian doorway in the middle of the wall. It was apparently a blind door, for the space between the marvelously moulded uprights was filled up with the same smooth porphyry that covered walls, floor and ceiling.

We could not stay then to examine it; we were gasping for air already, and although a little air came in through the square hole

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we had entered by it would only have been a matter of seconds before we all collapsed. So we climbed back into the boat, Joan Angela first, and I last. I lingered to make sure of the direction of that door.

"There must be an earth-mound overhead," I said. "We can find that from the outside. Joan Angela, we've won the game! Old Khufu pays the bets!"

CHAPTER XVII

Magnificent simplicity.

IT WAS after midnight when we emerged from that tunnel and found Chu Chi Ying and Atkins waiting for us. They had had some trouble in keeping inquisitive laborers at bay, but having heard our engine barking in the tunnel all the while had only been in doubt about our safety when we stopped the thing. According to Atkins they could not distinguish a word we said, but could identify our voices miles away.

Chu Chi Ying's face wrinkled into smiles as he sat listening to us, nodding like an automatic toy.

"Sometime finding porphyly chamber same size, same shape, same evlything upstairs in Pylamid," he announced with an air of conviction. "Way out Pylamid topside. Find him someday. Me savvy."

He was really only interested in the Pyramid. The treasure did not attract him; what gave him exquisite delight was seeing the proof that his deductions were correct. He was too old to care for money, or too wise; I don't know which. Our motive from now on became wholly mercenary.

DAWN found us down by the Nile in two Ford cars, exploring for a mound to correspond with the porphyry chamber and the tunnel's end. We found it. There was a place where a great gray rock thrust itself a short way out into the Nile and rose for fifty feet above the water. Inland, its southern end was all rock, but it shelved downward toward the north and northeast, and there the earth had lodged so deeply that a *fellah* saw fit to own it, rig up a water-wheel, and grow crops. Joan Angela bought that piece of land from him at his own price—a price that would have put a war-crazed alien profiteer to shame; and he went away disappointed and grumbling at having been robbed, with a fortune in his pocket.

Then we really went to work; but first we had to build a long shed for camouflage, and in doing that we unearthed the stone foundations of an ancient temple. There was nothing whatever remaining of that old temple except foundations, part of the flooring, and one end wall, with an unroofed chamber behind the wall that had been used by the priests for their mysteries. You find the same sort of chamber in all old Eygptian temples, but the remarkable part about this one was that it backed against the rock, which had been trimmed off vertically and carved to represent door-posts. The space between the door-posts was blocked with one enormous granite slab, whose edges were so beautifully morticed into the carved post as to be almost undiscoverable without a magnifying glass.

We had to get ropes and lumber on the scene before we dared tackle that granite slab, and even so we had to chip the edges with a chisel all the way around before we could insert a wedge to pry it loose—only to discover then to our amazement that it was no false door, nor yet a covering set in place to conceal a door, but the actual door itself. It was balanced in the middle, top and bottom, and revolved on stone hinges when a pressure of about a hundred pounds was applied to the right-hand side.

It gave access to a narrow passage in the rock of about twice its own width. That passage was twenty feet long, and blind, but the end of it was built of porphyry, and when we set a jack against a plank upended on the porphyry wall and began to apply pressure exactly the same thing happened; a porphyry door revolved against the clock, away from us, and we walked straight through into that marvelous, empty, polished chamber above the tank at the secret tunnel's end.

Now Khufu and his priests no doubt intended that marvelous piece of architecture to symbolize the awe-inspiring emptiness and peace that await all royal applicants at heaven's gate. But the floor was good and slippery, and we danced on it. I would just as soon play golf or tiddledywinks as dance, but Joan Angela insisted, so we did the U. S. twostep all over Khufu's floor. Maybe we'd better say that she did, and I did my best. Grim and Naylor did a breakdown, South Carolina style, though

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Naylor refused to tell where he learned that noble art. We had solved how to get the treasure out without betraying it, providing there was treasure! Counting your chickens before they are hatched is profitable business, despite the proverb-mongers, if you do it in the right mood.

Nothing remained to do at that end, except to keep intruders away. The next thing was to build a dam across the tunnel, at the point where we originally blasted our way in, and then pump the water away from Khufu's island tomb, which we were confident of reaching by way of the well as soon as all the water was exhausted.

But that was a lengthy job. We had to get cement to start with, and set up forms, and mix and pour the stuff, observing without much pride the difference in quality between our cement and the mixture made by Khufu's engineers. The job had to be done carefully, because if the dam should give way enough water could come flowing down that tunnel to drown us all in a very few minutes.

We procured a good American rotary pump from a dealer in second-hand machinery, and an oil-fired steam-engine to drive it. You can get any kind of black man to wet-nurse a boiler, but what the same man can do to a kerosene or gas-engine would take two skilled mechanics to adjust again.

There was no trouble, of course, about getting rid of the water. We simply pumped it out over the dam and back into the tunnel toward the Nile; but there were hours, and even days, when we suspected we had merely cut a circular tunnel in the middle and were trying to pump the whole Nile not only dry but back into itself. An immense space had to be cleared of water—not only the lake surrounding Khufu's tomb, but galleries and holes and tunnels, whose purpose none has guessed yet, but whose aggregate content was prodigious.

We finally got a second pump and another engine, and the two together gave us a twelve-inch flow of water, which began to make an impression. Meanwhile, we had to keep on working at the false excavation, and long before the pumping was finished the sand was thrown so far back, and so many of the huge monoliths were exposed, that we could invent no further excuse for delay. So we got a new, stout sheer-legs set in place, with a hoisting-gear capable of lifting thirty tons, and after another day's hard labor contrived to get a chain around one of the stones. All we could do then was to hoist the monolith and set balks of timber under it, which was enough, though, to provide access to the gloom below.

And oh, the rush, when the balks were in place at last and the great stone came to rest on them! Every hired man on the lot, Tommies and Gyppies and all, went down through the dark slot like rats into a hole, imagining gold and diamonds and all the farms and public houses and motor-cars the loot would buy! They did not wait for lamps or candles, but probably expected to find their way by the light of the gleaming gems that would be heaped up in piles in the tomb. And at that, they were no bigger fools than the rest of us, who buy gilt-edged stock in mines that don't exist.

We were in no hurry. Chu Chi Ying was much too positive, and had hitherto been much too often right in his calculations for us to buy any stock in that hole; so we sat on top and waited for reports, merely sending down a lantern by the last man—a private from the Tower Hamlets of London Town. We waited for an hour, listening to the rumble of their voices and the occasional sound of great stones being shifted, before the same man showed his face in the opening once more, lantern in hand.

"——blimey, it's a dormitory!" he remarked. "A perishin' vault full o' lines o' drinkin' troughs, wi' lids on 'em what weighs a ton apiece! Inside nothin' but blokes' bones; what all died kickin'! Come an' see, miss!"

"No treasure?" she asked.

"Not a thripenny bit. And we've 'unted!"

We climbed into a spacious vault that looked as if it had been hewn from solid rock, but was patched up with masonry in places to make it rectilinear and smooth. It was three hundred feet long from end to end, and down the length of each side in triple rows were plain stone sarcophagi, from most of which the lids had already been forced by our gang of invaders—a simple enough business, because they had not been fastened down in any way, but had been kept in place by sheer deadweight.

There were no wooden coffins inside those stone boxes; no mummy-wrappings, nor

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any of the usual trappings of the Egyptian corpse; but inside each was a grown man's skeleton. Not one of the lot lay straight. The legs of some were raised, as if they had died in the effort to force off the stone lid. They had been buried naked and alive. And what was worse, some gruesome stuff had been put in with them, to preserve them.

We had the gang lift off every lid, and with the aid of lamps and candles we examined each interior carefully. There was not in any one of them the slightest trace of ornament or jewelry, or of anything that could identify the individual or explain the reason for his burial alive. But Chu Chi Ying laughed. A Chinaman can always see humor in cruelty; even the best of them seem to have that characteristic.

"—— fools bury Khufu. By an' by priests bury them. Dead men not say much!" he remarked. That was the long and short of it. Those were the bodies of men who carried Khufu into his last resting-place, treasure and all, and the priests had stopped their mouths—unkindly, as the way of such priests is.

Well, we had a story for the newspapers at any rate. We had an alibi, and perfect proof of the failure of our excavations. We had a story for the soldiers and the labor-gang to tell in barracks and bazaars, and something to show the reporters, who came out and grinned at Joan Angela. We stopped the pumps, that afternoon of the famous interview, that all the papers published with such scathing sneers at "foreign Americans, who think they know so much, but whose brains are nothing better than mechanical, producing no literature worthy of the name," so nobody got wise to the fact that we had other excavations under way.

A very learned Egyptian professor burst into print with the explanation that the place we had found was an execution dungeon for the worst type of criminals, and neither very ancient nor of more than casual interest. A discovery has to be "hig-liff" and distinctly more than casual to interest Egypt. Even the *fellaheen* began to be less troublesome.

So we were able to cut down our guard of British Tommies to the original ten under Naylor's command, handpicked by him; and with them we made a bargain, which, as far as I know, every single man has loyally kept. That done, and the last inquisitive reporter gone to write his acridly sarcastic comments, we resumed work with the pumps, while Grim went back to Cairo to confer with the financial member of the council and arrange for a Government boat to lie at anchor close by our new shed on the bank of the Nile.

It was a peculiar coincidence, which nobody ever seemed to notice, that that gas-driven, white-painted, yacht-lined inspection-boat was manned and occupied exclusively by officers, who lay aboard and yawned, and wondered at intervals what the confounded *tamasha* was all about. But they were young men, who had been told, although by no means everything, too much to care to ask for further information.

One thing that we did while waiting for that water to disappear was to pull down several of the wooden huts belonging to the camp and saw them up into short lengths ready to be nailed together in the form of rough boxes. It might have given the game away if we had ordered boxes made in Cairo.

THERE came a day at last when the pumps sucked little else but mud, and choked accordingly. By that time we had a wooden shed built over the well, with a door that could be barricaded from the inside as well as padlocked from without; and inside that hut we had high rubber boots, lanterns, electric torches, picks, crowbars, and two of those ever useful screw-jacks with which you can shift almost anything that can be shifted. We also had a stout beam fixed in place across the top of the well, from which a rope-ladder hung, and we had plenty of rope in addition for making safe our further descent into the unknown labyrinths.

The hut had no windows, and two of our Tommies guarded the place on the outside. We even had food with us, to avoid the necessity of interrupting our explorations. We started the descent so provided in every way that we could find that treasure, and get rid of it too, if expedient, without once coming to the surface.

Joan Angela claimed the right to go down first, and after some argument we let her have her way, that being the only possible solution, for she would not yield. So down she went with a lantern in hand, and I went next after her, armed with a club. The rope-ladder was easy, of course, but nothing

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could have been more difficult than that slippery ramp below, down which I had so nearly drowned myself on the first prospecting trip. Even with a good stout rope to cling to, it was impossible to keep your feet, for the slime of centuries had established itself on the smooth stone, and our descent became a series of spasmodic efforts to check the speed. Somewhere up above us Mrs. Watts let go the rope and screamed; Naylor tried to get in her way by throwing his legs out, but she carried him with her, and the two dropped down on top of me, one on each side of me, clinging to each other; it was the sheerest piece of luck that I did not let go the rope and lower the lot of us down on top of Joan, in which case there would have been four first-class casualties for a beginning.

For from the lower lip of the descending ramp that connected the well with the underground cavern, to the floor of the cavern itself was a drop of more than forty feet. We had to go down hand-over-hand, swinging in darkness and, as I said, Joan Angela went first; but she surrendered her lantern to me, and by holding to the rope with one hand I contrived to attach the lantern-bail to the end of a ball of twine and to lower it foot by foot as she descended.

Mrs. Watts was in a hopeless predicament, for she was afraid to go over that edge, yet unable to get back. Nobody wanted to go down ahead of her, for fear she would let go her hold and fall on the unfortunates below. So finally, after a lot of talk, and after Joan Angela had called up cheerily to me to let go the lantern because she stood on rock bottom, I took Mrs. Watts down pick-a-back, as the only way out of the difficulty—and a darned, difficult, knuckle-breaking, desperate expedient at that!

Then, standing at the bottom, peering about us by quivering lantern-light, we got another illustration of Khufu's forethought. He had conceived it possible that some one in the centuries to come might empty out the water by some means, and had made provision for their reception after they should lose their footing on the slippery ramp and come hurtling downward. The rock on to which we had to step as we let go the rope was carved into regularly spaced fangs three feet in height, two feet or so apart, and of about the same shape and thickness as an elephant's tusk. It would have been absolutely sure death to fall on them. Nor was that all. There were crocodiles—blind, white-scaled monsters in there—waiting to finish what the stone fangs left undone! My instinct that day when I made the first descent was right.

Joan Angela screamed and jumped. I brought down my club on a brute's snout in the nick of time. If they couldn't see, they could smell or else hear, and nine of them came slithering their tails to left and right across the slimy floor, their teeth rattling like castanets and their great claws scratching on the rock.

There was no swarming up that rope again to safety, for the others were coming down it. The only chance was to stand among those stone fangs and use the club until Naylor could get down with his army revolver. Naylor only had six cartridges. The blind brutes set their snouts and armored claws between the stone uprights and tried to force their shoulders through to reach our legs, and if you think they did not fight back when their snouts were struck you have another guess due. They hissed, foaming at the mouth, and although they could not see, as we speak of sight, whenever I struck at one of them another was certain to snap at the club, and several times my arm was within an ace of being caught in the clattering jaws.

And stink! It was worse than carrion, that smell of the guardians of Khufu's tomb, much worse. Carrion is stuff you can understand; the reek of those filthy reptiles told of centuries of unintelligible gruesomeness.

When Naylor got down he put six shots into them, and five took effect; but that left four of the monsters to be dispatched by some other means, and although crocodiles are not nearly as dangerous out of the water as when in it, in spite of superstition to the contrary, one medium-size wooden club was no argument. Moreover, something had to be done about it fairly soon, for the soldiers were swarming down hand-over-hand behind us, and there was not going to be room for all of us to stand between those fangs of rock. On the other hand, lantern-light seemed to have some effect on their scale-covered eyes, for they rushed at the lanterns, so that whoever stepped outside that pale had either to fight in the dark or else expose himself to double risk.

The ultimate solution was clumsy but

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effectual. We had to put all lights out except one, and swing that one outward on a pole that one of the soldiers had brought along for exploration purposes. The brutes snapped and hissed at that, and I swatted them. I'm a hefty specimen, and what I hit most usually breaks, but it was rather too much of a cave-man shambles to come under the heading of amusement.

Then, though, at last we were ready for the great adventure, and it was merely a matter of minutes then before we knew the secret of Khufu's burial arrangements, although that was not the whole of the problem yet.

Herodotus was right. Chu Chi Ying was right. We were in a cavern of vast dimensions that entirely surrounded an island of rock. And the rock under the island was undermined, so that it stood on rows of rectangular stone uprights, and when the cavern was full there was water over, under and all around it. On the floor of the basin between the island and the outer walls there were no less than twelve deep pits with sloping sides, presumably for catching silt, which they had done, whether or not that was their purpose, for they were all about two-thirds full.

We walked all around the island without discovering any means of entry, but it had been so obviously trimmed off square by hand, and was so plainly artificial at one corner, where masonry had been added to bring it into alignment, that the mere absence of an obvious opening did not discourage anybody. We made the circuit three more times, like the children of Israel parading around Jericho, but no walls fell for our convenience, although quite a lot of optimism dawned.

For one thing, there was the strength of those stone uprights to be considered. They were beautifully shaped, and arranged rather like the whalebone in a "right" whale's mouth; and each one in itself was slender when compared to the bulk of the island overhead. Each was much too small, for instance, for a man to have burrowed upward through it to avoid the water; but there was a veritable forest of them, spaced hardly more than a foot apart, and they were obviously intended to bear a prodigious weight—something heavier than the island itself, which could have been supported safely by less than a quarter of their number. That gave us ground for believing that the island was hollow, and that the hollowness had weight enclosed in it.

The soldiers favored blasting. That was just the military point of view, which is certainly practical enough in an age when the walls of cities no longer fall conveniently at the prayer of invading hosts. But there was something a lot too dignified, and stately and calmly beautiful about the proportions of that wonderful island for the rest of us to care to use dynamite without trying other means first. Even Chu Chi Ying, a convinced iconoclast, who cared for nothing under heaven but the calculus and its solution, and who had come down the rope on Grim's back because he said it was time to die soon anyhow so that danger did not matter to him any more, was indignant at the suggestion of shooting away the props until the whole mass should collapse. Moreover, the dynamite was up aloft in the shed beside the well, and nobody wanted to shin up there and fetch it.

So we got the soldiers to make a platform of their backs, and clambered up on to a ledge that faced toward the eastward at the island's narrowest end. From that point of vantage the ledge seemed like a threshold, and the island like a small dark temple of beautiful proportions, perfect in design and measurements as the Great Pyramid itself. In length it was about a hundred and twenty feet; in breadth sixty, in height perhaps twenty-eight; but there were no doors or windows visible, nor any indications of a door, so we had the wooden pole passed up and used it on the wall in front of us in the same way that Koreans ring their great bells. The wall boomed hollow!

"If his body is inside there, I'll bet you Khufu left some way of getting out without too much exertion," said Joan Angela. "Try pushing hard."

But I had another intuition of impending danger. I took the pole first, and did some measuring. Making a rough estimate—for the pole was too short for accuracy—I came to the conclusion that if there was a door in the wall that faced us, and supposing it were made out of one huge slab, that slab would be long enough when lowered to form a ramp from the threshold to the floor of the cavern. Supposing such a stone to be lowered in that way, it would make a fairly convenient means of sliding up heavy weights, such as a stone sarcophagus; and if unwelcome intruders were to

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be standing on that threshold when it should fall outward—

"And on whomsoever it falls it shall grind him to powder," I said. "Suppose we all get off here."

So we did. There was no means of setting a screw-jack against the perpendicular stone, for the threshold sloped downward at an angle of 35° and if my surmise was correct, that the facing rock was hinged at the bottom, a jack set against the lower end would not have done much good. The problem was how to get that great slab to fall forward, supposing that it really was designed to do so, and at the same time how not to be underneath it when it fell.

The surface was absolutely smooth. There was not a crack to be seen, although that could partly be accounted for by the deposit of dark slime. The only way that I could see out of the difficulty was to damage some of the supports after all, on the theory that the weight on the floor might then cause a fractional sag, which would tilt the door forward and start it.

But there we were faced by another difficulty, for those uprights were so closely set together that nobody could force his way between them; and to stand in front to do the damage would mean the imminent risk of being crushed under the falling door. It began to look as if some one would have to go back for the dynamite, but I decided to try one forlorn expedient first.

So we set to work with the picks and crowbars and tried to smash the uprights at either corner, not expecting to produce a sag in the floor so easily as all that, but hoping that the vibration of the blows might communicate itself through the masonry and loosen something above that depended on balance for its stability

And about the tenth blow turned the trick! A section of stone in the middle of the front wall, amounting to a fifth of the whole width, tilted outward from the top without warning and fell with a two-hundred ton crash, so that it broke loose from its stone hinges below and smashed itself to fragments on the cavern floor! The din was an explosion. The cracking stone sent splinters whizzing like sharpened shrapnel.

But some of the broken pieces were large enough to form stepping-stones, and we scrambled up, flashing our lights into the gap the monolith had left. But our lights fell on another blank wall, of polished granite this time, and again I had a hunch to call our party back. No amount of striking at the supports seemed to make any impression on that sheet of polished granite, so I tried poking at it with the pole from as far to one side as could be managed, so as to avoid the thing if it fell on me. But instead of falling outward like the other it showed symptoms of revolving on a central hinge, yielding an appreciable fraction of an inch when I thrust against the pole with all my might.

"Let's all get up there now and shove," suggested Naylor.

But I still had a hunch. It seemed to me that a man who had thought of that simple means of flattening intruders, by balancing a monolith to fall forward on them, might have also thought of something slightly more intricate by way of a trap for such fortunates as had escaped the falling door. It would be the most natural thing in the world to get up there and shove against that polished granite the moment it showed signs of yielding. If Zegloush Pasha had been with us, or even Moustapha and Mrs. Aintree, I would have sent them up to shove without an atom of compunction. I know others, too, whom I might have employed without prejudice on that occasion. But the gang we had with us was a good gang, and Joan Angela is simply irreplaceable.

I sat down for a minute to think, and the sharp edge of the broken stone I sat on hurt the part that I sit with, and provided the idea. That piece of stone weighed about two hundred pounds, and it occurred to me that if we could catapult it in some way against the granite leaf that might be hint enough for any hidden mechanism to start performing.

We had plenty of rope and a good, stout pole, but you need rather more than that to construct a working catapult in fifteen minutes. However, I had the idea all right, and a pendulum is just as good. There were two sockets high up in the sides of the opening, into which stone projections had fitted to help preserve the balance of the outer monolith. I cut the pole to an exact length to fit across the opening with one end in each socket, and stood on the shoulders of Grim and Atkins while I fitted the pole in place; it had to be forced in, and made a good tight fit.

The rest was simple. All we had to do was to throw the rope over that beam, tie

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the rock to one end of it, and haul up until we could set it swinging at the proper level. In that way we were able to deliver blows on the granite leaf that amounted to something.

I guess we swung the rock against the granite, knocking on Khufu's bedroom door for admittance, as you might say, nine or ten times before anything happened. Then, however, the granite revolved at least a foot. And then the top fell free from the retaining socket, and the whole mass tumbled outward, as the first had done. I don't think it weighed more than ten tons; but ten tons are enough.

That was the last of Khufu's hints to strangers. The tomb yawned wide, and we climbed up over the débris to investigate; Joan Angela leading the way with an electric torch. And the first sight was bitter disappointment—disillusion—anticlimax—although beautiful; you had to admit that it was beautiful.

There was only a narrow passage down the midst of the rock, and at the end of it one plain sarcophagus of hand-rubbed granite, resting on a carved stone boat. Khufu had even provided the ship in which he proposed to sail to heaven down that forty-mile-long tunnel he had made! That was all there was in there. That sarcophagus did not hold wealth enough to settle the debts of nations.

Yet, as I said, it was beautiful, for the two doors had been water-tight. Not even damp had entered to spoil the gilding. All down one side the wall was finished in dull gold; in silver all down the other, although the floor and ceiling were of polished granite and there was no skirting board or decoration of any kind to conceal the joint between granite and gold and silver; it struck me that it would have looked better if there had been something of the sort.

However, we all hurried along to the sarcophagus and got busy with crowbars prying off the lid—no easy task, for the lid weighed tons, rested in a mortise, and was fastened down with stone pegs that were difficult to find. However, we got it off at last, and tipped it over sidewise against the gold wall, where it knocked off a section of solid gold sheeting about six feet high by three in width, for all the world like a piece of wall-board, and of about the same thickness but heavy enough, of course to fall like lead; and it had the ring about it that no man ever mistakes for anything but gold when he has heard it once.

Joan Angela screamed, not with fright but with sheer amazement. There was no more gilt in that place than there was garlic! The walls on either hand were lined with solid gold and silver sheets supported on granite uprights, and behind them on either hand the gold and silver treasure of Khufu was stacked in ingots from floor to roof, rows and rows and countless rows of them without a fraction of an inch between, except where passages were left that gave just enough room for a broad-shouldered man to pass!

All was gold on one side. All was silver on the other, and whoever could estimate the value of it all has quicker brains than I have. Even Chu Chi Ying refused to state the amount approximately; he sat down on the boat that bore Khufu's sarcophagus, with a "told you so" expression on his face, and borrowed a cigaret from Grim. I take it that was his comment on the situation.

The simplicity was magnificent. There was no attempt at ornament, inscription, comment, explanation. There lay Khufu, and there was his money—or rather the money he had wrung and raked and filched from Egypt in the course of fifty years. Inside the stone sarcophagus was the customary wooden one, and another wooden one inside that again, but never a mark or hieroglyph on any of them to announce who the occupant might be.

We raised the inner lid of all, and there lay his mummy, plainly wrapped, with the jars containing entrails alongside of him; but we did not pull the wrapping off the mummy, for it seemed a shame to risk damaging the relics of that arch old miser, who could live so masterfully thoughtful for his latter end and die in such prodigious state.

Consider the gall of the old rascal! Think of wringing all that bullion in taxes from the folk who had to build the Pyramid to help him hide the place where he proposed to stow it all away! and then consider him lying there without so much as a name on his coffin, but with all that good money to right and left with which to purchase his way into heaven—and within a hundred yards of him the dungeon in which the men who had stacked the bullion were done to death!

And what hold had he over the priests, do you suppose, that prevented them from

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telling the next king where Egypt's treasure lay? The next man must have come to a throne whose treasury was empty, and although the priests of those days took small stock in kings, but rather used them as an adjunct to the priestly power, you would think they would have made some use of their secret knowledge. For they must have known of that treasure. Nothing could be done in those days without the knowledge of the priests, nor even without their permission. Wouldn't the story of the politics of that make better reading than the quarrels of the League of Nations?

However, our job, like Khufu's, was accomplished. There remained no more to do than to set a guard over the tomb, and to start that prodigious treasure on its way in the duck punt along that forty-mile tunnel to the government boat that waited near our big shed by the Nile. The bargain we had made with the soldiers was that they should hold their tongues and be paid, provided sufficient treasure were discovered, the equivalent of five thousand pounds apiece. Naylor received his reward from the authorities direct, and I don't know how much it amounted to; but Joan Angela refused to touch a nickel's worth of the treasure, subject to her one original condition that the British should spend it on reducing national debts.

And of course, neither Grim nor I could take any of it, for we were the employees of a firm that had undertaken a definite task for a stipulated fee, to include expenses. Joan Angela paid Meldrum Strange's bill in due course, and that ended our connection with the affair.

But if you want to check me up on this story, I will point to a few clues that you may follow if you wish.

In the first place, then: There are ten ex-private soldiers, who all purchased their discharge from the British Army on the same date, and who are all now settled in business in one English county town. That's only a coincidence, you might say, but here's another one: On Joan Angela's ranch in California there is a man named Atkins, who is boss storekeeper and generally responsible for goods and chattels. He seems to have private means, for he drives his own car, and smokes cigars of a kind that you and I can't afford much oftener than once a year.

And here's yet one more clue: In Singapore, in a little side street that runs down toward the quays there lives a Chinaman named Chu Chi Ying, who teaches no more "fat-fool first mates" how to pass examinations for their master's ticket, but smiles nearly all day long and amuses himself by making marvelous astronomical calculations. He seems to have an income quite sufficient for his needs, and a portrait of Joan Angela hangs on the wall just inside the doorway of his house. Go and look, if you don't believe me. On your way, consider the stuffed, blind white crocodile in the Gezivich Museum, Cairo.

And finally, there's this: I don't pretend to be in the fiscal secrets of the British Government, few folk are. But I'm curious. And it is common knowledge that the British have begun making enormous payments on the war debt that they owe to the United States. Where did all those millions come from? Do you suppose that Khufu is paying his way into heaven by any chance?

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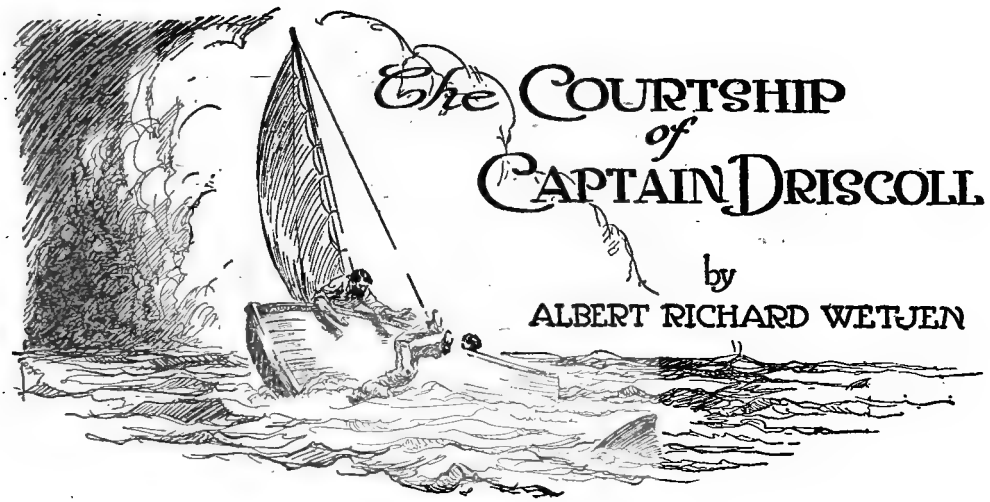

The Courtship of Captain Driscoll

by

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

Author of "One Lone White Man."

THERE was not even time to make use of the wireless. Out of the murk of the typhoon the stranger ship had staggered, a big four-masted bark, to drive the *Wanderer* nearly in two and go staggering on into the murk again, her bows matchwood and her holds taking water fast.

The *Wanderer* sank in five minutes. How it was that even three of the boats were lowered and got away clear of the hull in so short a time was a mystery. Luckily she carried only twelve saloon passengers, and her crew were experienced in the moods of the Pacific. There was no panic, but action was swift. But for the fact that the *Wanderer* was on the very edge of the circular storm, which was abating fast, the three boats that did get clear could not have lived in the after sea for five minutes. Circumstances and luck favored them.

Dawn, with the wind dropping to a mere gale, found the boats some three miles from one another and separating fast, tossed about helplessly on the tremendous seas that rose in proportion as the wind fell. The starboard accident boat, which the second mate commanded, was the smallest of the three, and was minus the air tanks that lined the sides of the other two. But she was also the lightest loaded, fortunately and unfortunately. The gear usually stowed in ship's life-boats was in a great part missing, as the accident boat was in constant use in port and it would have been in the way for quick launching and hoisting. There was the usual tin of biscuits, which had been made fast beneath the midship stretcher, but only one breaker of water lay on the cradles near it. A few other odds and ends, besides the mast and sails, cluttered the bottom boards.

There were twelve people aboard. The second mate, a youngster scarcely out of his apprenticeship, white-faced and afraid, but grimly concealing the fact, sat in the stern sheets and made useless attempts to aid the sea-anchor in keeping the bow on to the seas. At his feet huddled two women, violently sea-sick and oblivious to their surroundings. Just for'ard of them crouched three men, passengers, also sea-sick and careless of their fate.

In the bow, keeping a steady watch on the line that held the straining canvas anchor, sat a man whom the *Wanderer's* crew had vaguely known as Captain Driscoll; he, too, had been a passenger. At his feet two apprentices, mere boys, huddled together and whimpered between spasms of sickness. Amidships, three sailors crouched clear of the blown spume and muttered together; a bottle, passing from hand to hand, explained why they were indifferent to their surroundings and not at all sick.

As the wind continued to drop and the seas to dance their mad jigs higher and higher, so the boat lifted and fell until even the man in the bow, who was the best sailor of them all, became dizzy and breathless.

"The Courtship of Captain Driscoll," copyright, 1922, by Albert Richard Wetjen.

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He kept his eyes fixed on the straining line before him and tried to think of something other than shipwreck. Every moment he expected to hear the sea suck aboard from one of the overhanging crests, and tell of the end. But the very lightness of the boat, the fact she was clinker built and possessed of some little keel, and yet heavily enough laden to give her some steadiness, combined to let her ride the foaming crests and soar down the smoking valleys with an easiness that was a credit to her builders.

Nor did she ship much water—only a wisp of spray driving over the gunwale on occasion and rattling like small shot against the opposite side. The bottom boards in course of time were afloat; and the water, washing from side to side, chilled those crouching in it, for all of its sickly warmth.

The second mate saw all this, but he made no move. The command to bale should have come from him, but he did not utter it. It was his first typhoon, his first wreck, and his first great responsibility. He was afraid, deadly afraid. Once his eyes met those of the man in the bows, and in them was an anguished plea.

Captain Driscoll sighed. Poor boy! He understood. The youngster was scarcely out of his teens, and so inexperienced. But he would learn. In another few years he would go through a wreck with a smile on his lips and laughter in his heart. And he was game. The way his jaw was set and his hand held the kicking tiller showed that. He would not betray the white feather in front of the others.

Captain Driscoll made a precarious way aft, balancing by one hand on the port gunwale and waiting till the boat steadied on a crest before he made a step. As he passed the three sailors midships they ceased muttering and watched him. One of them said something in a low voice, at which the others laughed.

"Better sit down," one jeered, "before you get pushed into the ditch, Mr. Passenger!"

The captain stopped abruptly and looked at the three inflamed faces for a moment. His gray eyes were icy-hard.

"I want you men to know I hold a master's ticket, and if I take charge of this boat, as I expect to, I shall want civility and obedience. If anything else is offered, I shall know how to act."

He moved on and left the men gasping, too dumfounded for the moment to reply. They laughed later, and applied themselves to the bottle.

The second mate looked up, and his eyes lost a little of their glassiness as they encountered the captain's. He licked his lips and grasped the other's coat sleeve, tensely pulling him down on the locker at his side.

"I—I heard it said, aboard—aboard the *W-Wanderer* that you—you were Driscoll, *the* Driscoll," he stammered haltingly. "I wish—wish you would help me, sir. This—this is my first—my first—You understand!"

The captain's gray eyes softened, and he pressed the faltering man's shoulder kindly.

"Go for'ard, son, and see that the sea-anchor line holds fast. Leave things to me. I'll take charge."

The second mate gulped and muttered his gratitude. Then he stumbled for'ard to the bows, the sailors jeering at him drunkenly as he passed. He took no heed. He was aware of a great shame, for he had turned over the boat he was in command of to a passenger. He had failed in his crisis, and he knew it was through fear.

He did not realize that the very fact he had not broken under the strain showed he was true steel, and that all he needed was tempering. He would not fail again. The best of men are not sure of themselves until they learn their limits and have had some little experience. The young officer was learning, and gaining his now.

The captain stared straight ahead and wondered how it was going to end. He had been going to America on the *Wanderer* when the typhoon had swept upon her—going to America for a well-earned holiday among the big cities. The second mate had spoken truly when he called him *the* Driscoll. He was famous throughout the Pacific as one of the leading traders of the islands, master-owner of the schooner *Flying-Fish* of memorable glory; and he was the little tin god of every ship's officer from Seattle to Perth.

His god was adventure, and he worshiped at the rainbow shrine with the fervidness of a fanatic, as he had since he was small. So it was that he was unafraid to find himself in the *Wanderer's* castaway boat; he had outgrown fear long ago. But for the women he would have been thrilled and even, perhaps, taken some relish in the experience, though it led to death.

It was the women that bothered him. For himself he preferred to die in his boots,

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as he had lived. But women were different. They were not made for adventure. They were made to be loved, worshiped, and to make beautiful a very sordid world. They had no business at sea.

What had the two sea-sick women at his feet come to face? Hardship; a heat that would drive them insane by day, and a moon that would blind them by night. Thirst that would tear their bodies to pieces cell by cell. Well he knew how much chance there was of getting picked up. The boat was too far to the north of the regular steamship lane. A wandering whaler might sight them, or a windjammer blown from her course.

He sighed and blinked as a wisp of spray drove into his face. One of the women moaned, and he looked down at her pityingly. Like most clean sailors he had lived apart from women, and he held them in awe.

The sailors amidships were in a semi-stupor and incapable of being useful. The safety of the boat depended on two men—the captain at the tiller and the second mate in the bows. Throughout the long, cloud-obscured day they kept their vigil and on into the next night, until another dawn broke clear and warm, and the sea smoothed rapidly to a glassy swell. There was no wind.

With the first of the pearly light the captain beckoned the second mate to come and take the tiller, while he went amidships and stirred the sailors with the toe of his boot.

"Come on here, and get busy bailing!"

One of the men swore sleepily and raised himself on his elbow. He was wet through with the wash over the bottom boards, and shivered as his senses began to function. His bleared, blood-shot eyes rested for a moment on the captain standing above him, and he spat with contempt.

"Who'n —— are you? Go t' blazes!"

He sank back again with a grunt; and the next minute he was being battered about from one side of the boat to the other.

Scarcely knowing what had happened, he was pitched at last into the bows, and found himself on his knees bailing with an iron dipper in feverish haste. The two other sailors rapidly joined him, completely cowed. Only the sullen glances they shot at the man who had tamed them showed their unwillingness.

The captain next woke the passengers. They were still sea-sick and groped to their knees complainingly. They had paid for their passage. What right had any one to set them to work? Let the crew do what was necessary.

"I paid for my passage too, but if you want to see home again you'll have to do what I'm doing—get busy! Never mind being sick. That'll pass off. Get this mast stepped!" Wondering that they should do so, they obeyed. There was no doubt who was in charge of the boat.

The captain picked the women up from the bottom boards and laid them on oars stretched between the gunwales while the water was being pitched overboard. The boards had been well afloat, and the women were wet. He roused them to wring out their clothes as best they could, and assured them with a few words of cheer that they would soon be warm and dry when the sun was properly up. Two hours later the boat looked vastly different.

THE mast was stepped, and the halyards were made fast about two-thirds of the way up. From the mast they were carried aft to an oar lashed upright to the after stretcher, and there lashed at a height of about five feet. Over the halyards, thus forming a somewhat shaky ridgepole, was flung the mains'l, the sides of which were drawn down and lashed by the cringles to the gunwale, the whole forming an awning that kept out the fierce heat of the sun's rays.

The solitary water-breaker was reposing in the stern locker, along with the two axes, a tin of blue flares, one of matches, and a few other odds and ends the boat had carried. The bottom boards were drying fast; and on them the two women were now sitting, gazing desolately about and clutching nervously at a stretcher when the boat gave an extra sickening swoop or rolled ominously.

The three sailors had gathered in the bow and had commenced to mutter again, their vicious eyes set on the captain's face and their lips drawn in a half-snarl. The apprentices, with the instinct that they were embryo officers, left them and crawled to the stern near where the second mate sat, nodding with fatigue and relief from strain. Only the captain, standing amidships, his legs wide-spread to the lunge of the boat, seemed entirely in place and confident of the outcome of the whole affair.

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He caught sight of the sailors drinking from a half-empty bottle, and with a few quick movements he had it in his hand.

"Cut out this drinking," he ordered crisply. "We shall need everything liquid before long."

He slipped the bottle into his hip pocket as he spoke, and as the three men rose simultaneously and with angry snarls whipped out their sheath knives, his hand came forward again holding a wicked-looking automatic. He jammed the muzzle viciously in the ribs of the nearest man.

"Sit down, you swine! The first man who tries to start anything will get shot! Understand?"

"What t' —— right you got taking charge?" blustered one man, a knotted-muscled, broad fellow with a dropping jaw and squint eyes. A huge scar that ran across his lips from nose to chin gave his face an evil appearance. His lips drew from his tobacco-stained teeth as he spoke.

"That's my business. Just do as your told, and we'll get on fine. Otherwise——"

He tapped the automatic significantly and backed away amidships before he turned.

Fully aware of the kind of men he was dealing with, he watched out of the corner of his eye. He was hardly quick enough to dodge completely the skilfully thrown knife, as his foothold was insecure in the plunging boat; and it ripped along his arm, slitting the coat sleeve and just drawing blood. His shot took the thrower in the shoulder, spinning him round with a gasp. His target choked, pawed wildly at the air, and then toppled overboard.

There was no attempt to save him. Even had he not been snatched away instantly by a smoking sea it would have been useless. He sank like a stone.

The two remaining sailors sank slowly to the bottom boards without a word, their eyes watching the face of the captain. The acrid smell of burned powder came to their nostrils.

For a moment the captain hesitated. He knew he would be doing a wise thing if he took the knives from the two remaining sailors. But he also knew they would not give their weapons up without a struggle; and the rocking, dipping boat was no place to tussle in. He might threaten them with his automatic again, but he doubted whether it would be much good. They had just enough to drink to make them bold, defiant. And anyway he did not want to give them the impression that he was in any way afraid of them. His magnificent contempt for them finally overrode his sailor's caution.

Slipping the automatic into his pocket, he continued his way aft; and meeting the mute horror of the women and the scarcely less horror of the men with a grim smile, he slipped into the second mate's place and allowed him to drop to the bottom boards in an attempt to sleep. For the first time the passengers began to take an active interest in the captain. They were very much afraid of him after what they had just seen; but they felt the force of his personality and his right to command, and they questioned that right not at all. Common danger levels barriers of reserve, however, and before long the three men passengers were talking with the gray-eyed, calm man in the stern sheets.

A stout little bald-headed man was the first to speak. He cleared his throat pompously, and, sitting on the stretcher in front of the captain, clasped his knees with pudgy hands. Under the awning the light was dim, and his face had rather a pasty hue.

"I like the way you're handling this situation, captain," he commenced. "My name's Terhune, Robert Terhune. I own the Red Funnel Line of Australian freighters. I'll give you five thousand pounds if you get me out of this, and a command on my best ship. Is there any chance of our getting picked up?"

The captain's eyes flicked with amusement for a moment. He was an island millionaire and owned as many schooners as the Red Funnel Line did steamships. The money offer classified the man immediately.

The captain's gaze wandered to the faces of the women, who were waiting to hear his answer with eager tenseness. He noticed that they were both pretty women, and vaguely saw that one of them was blue-eyed and fair, the other black-eyed and dark. He decided that the blue eyes were the finest he had ever seen, and that he liked the delicate features below them. He wondered what the woman's name was.

He drew himself together with a effort and turned to the bald-headed man.

"There is no use in concealing the truth," he commenced slowly; and then he hesi-

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tated as he saw the alarm leap to the eyes of his listeners.

He went on relentlessly, wondering why men were afraid of death. He could understand women.

"Our chance of getting picked up is about one in a million. The same odds hold on our chances of reaching land. If a wind would come, we might make the Marshall Islands; but there is no wind. It is barely possible the water will last out till a wind comes. If not——"

He paused and allowed the lisp of the sea to finish his sentence.

The listeners remembered every story they had ever heard of men dying in an open boat after untold agonies, and their imaginations did the rest. They shuddered. One of the passengers, a lean, sharp-faced man, pushed forward.

"Speaking of water, I'm thirsty. I haven't drunk for nearly forty-eight hours. There's water here. Don't try and keep it for yourself. I know! I saw you put it in the cupboard underneath where you are sitting!"

"Hush, Dick," called the woman with the blue eyes, laying a soft hand gently on the excited man's shoulder.

He flung it off, and the captain caught the gleam of a ring. Man and wife, he thought; only the man isn't a man—worse for the woman.

He answered evenly, his gray eyes steady with purpose.

"You will get your share of the water, never fear. There is just one breaker, and there will be just one drink a day, until—We drink at noon."

He pulled out a gold watch and studied the dial.

"We drink in two hours."

"Two hours!"

The man's voice rose.

"My God, I'm nearly dying with thirst already!"

A flicker of amusement showed in the captain's eyes again. Why were such men born?

"Wait for a week or two before you whine," he suggested dryly.

The woman with the black eyes spoke shrilly. As in the case of the bald-headed man, her words, her thin, shrewish lips, classified her.

"We're women, Mrs. Ranald and I! We ought to drink first, and as we need water. We can not stand what you men can!"

"Madam, there will be no trading on the accident of sex here. We are all in the same boat, so to speak, and we share and share alike."

The other woman's blue eyes flashed gloriously, and the captain caught his breath.

"I am sure Captain Driscoll knows what is best," she said softly. "We all have the same chance."

"Aw, shut up throwing bouquets, Marie! You make me sick," shouted her husband disgustedly; and he looked at her so that the captain could have struck him.

Talking made dry mouths drier, so it was soon abandoned; and silence fell over the boat. There was nothing to do but wait; and waiting in such circumstances is torture. Every minute seems an hour, every hour a day, and every day a year of untold agony, intensified by the anticipation of knowing that the next day, or year, will be more horrible than the last.

An open boat on the high seas is a little hell all by itself at the best of times, but coupled with despair and the hell of thirst it rapidly becomes unbearable. The blazing tropic sun beating fiercely from a diamond sky makes matters worse, and the cool water musically, mockingly rippling alongside adds to the exquisite torture.

A maddening impulse to bend over the side and drink, drink to bursting of the laughing fluid possesses the suffering. He is fascinated by the thought of water, sees mirages of clear springs and gurgling brooks, and knows unquenchable pangs by so seeing. The eye-aching blue of the sea, the sunwash shimmering off the swells, the salt of an occasional wisp of drifting spray, the vagrant fancies that come with excessive heat, all tend to madness; which tends to death! Yet the weaker are to be envied in an open boat. They sink the sooner into the coma, or to the brain-storms that end all suffering. It is the strong who pay, and pay dearly for their strength. They know longest the pain of cracked throats and blood-baked lips, of swollen tongues, and eyes that will not close for blisters. Yes, it is better, far better, to be the weakest when the water is gone.

AT THE end of the fourth day the last of the water came, and there seemed to sit beside each Thing in the sun-blistered boat another and a more Grisly Thing. It had been better had the

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Wanderer gone down with all hands. Her starboard accident boat was a floating mausoleum, where the red devils of gouged nerves walked hastily on their tasks.

Despairingly the Things looked at each other and shuddered. Had that ghastly, skin-covered skeleton once been a man? Had that sunk-eyed, hairy form of bones and blisters once been a woman? They were on the border-line between the conscious and the unconscious, between sanity and madness.

The woman of the blue eyes, Marie, had drawn near the captain. There was some invisible bond between them. There had been no word of love, no hand-clasps, but few glances; yet she leaned to him for comfort, for sympathy and help, rather than to her husband. The veneer of his egotism had worn very thin the past few days, and the ugly soul, that a fair face had covered, shone naked to the light.

She had married him for his dash and glamour, his false tinkle and the glitter of his wealth. He had never been put to the test until now. And he had broken. The sea, and thirst, had washed the metal of him, and it had assayed yellow! The woman in her turned from him in loathing, instinctively toward the man who was his direct opposite.

As for her husband himself, he took no heed. For him his wife had ceased to exist. He was thinking of himself, of the women he would never kiss, of the wine he would never drink, of the beauty he would never see, of all the luxuries of life that could be his, and would never be again.

Four weeks before he had heard a friend speak enthusiastically of Marie's beauty, and he had known a great satisfaction that she belonged to him, and was for other men only to look at. He had no time now for beauty, or honor. There are many such men alive, strangely.

The woman touched the captain's arm and pointed shakily astern. Turning, he saw a long, gray body slithering through the swells, followed by another. Two triangular fins cut the surface smoothly, setting up a little white wash. His eyes met the woman's, and he half-grinned.

"Gray nurses," he whispered hoarsely. "Are you afraid?"

She shook her head, and her hand sought his. She pressed it hard and choked.

"Not with you," she said, and the man's heart leaped.

Then she looked at her husband, who crouched moodily watching them from the bottom boards, and the fire died from their eyes.

Two hours later one of the apprentices went mad, and without a sound threw himself overboard. Before any attempt to save him could be made the nurses had him. The women forced a shriek from between blood-baked lips, and one or two of the men cursed as the gray demons tore at the body, and the sea became tinged red for a space.

The ripple in the apathy that had fallen over the boat did not last more than a minute. At the end of that time the Things were crouching as indifferently as ever. Only the woman, Marie, shook with dry sobs on the shoulder of the captain's stained white jacket. And still the calm persisted.

At the end of the sixth day the little company was sadly depleted. The bald-headed man had run amuck with a stretcher swinging in his two hands, and had been shot by the captain without a qualm.

One of the sailors had made a horrible suggestion that the blood be drained off before the body was flung overboard. The captain had hesitated, knowing that such a thing was bound to happen before the end. He had met wreck survivors during his career, and he had heard—tales.

He shuddered, and his eyes met the woman's. She said nothing, but he read loathing in her glance and ordered the sailor back to the bows. Grumbling sullenly, he went, and, assisted by his companion, dropped the corpse over the gunwale.

The other passenger had been snatched by one of the nurses while half-deliriously dangling his arm in the water. The black-eyed woman had commenced to laugh horribly one dawn, and had died, still laughing, four hours later. Her throat had burst and the hot, sticky blood had stained the other woman's skirt, causing her to lapse into a shuddering coma. It was the captain who bathed her forehead with sea-water, and brought her to consciousness and hell again.

The man Ranald had been the evil genius of the boat. While he could speak he was constantly complaining and reviling his wife. Once, before the water had gone, he had snatched her share and drunk it before the captain could stop him. He had received a thrashing with the tiller for

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that, that he would remember while reason lasted.

Now that it was agony to speak he sat and brooded, and vindictively eyed his wife and the man she patently preferred to him drawing closer to each other. He experienced a cold joy that she would soon die and that the captain would never possess her. It was his grain of comfort.

The second mate was the next to go. He stood up abruptly and pointed to the north with a talon-like hand. No one knew what visions his eyes were seeing.

"Land! Land!" he croaked, and with a short scream dived straight into the maws of the waiting sharks.

An hour later, after a good deal of muttering, the sailors came aft to the captain. Their throats worked horribly as they mouthed half-guessed words. They were desperate men and not to be denied. When even hope is dead, death itself loses its terrors.

They wanted to draw lots to see who should be sacrificed to save the others. Self-preservation was the first law, and the greatest. They were as anxious as the captain to die clean, but they had a right to make a bid for life.

Ranald was by turns eager to draw and afraid. Suppose he lost! The woman was not consulted. Nor was the remaining apprentice, sunk in a stupor midships.

The captain told the woman what had been proposed and admitted that there was no other chance. Again she said nothing, but her eyes restrained him. She was stronger in spirit than he.

She, at least, would die clean; for a conventional morality? The captain sneered inwardly. It was not half a million years since this female's kind had been cooking the corpses of their enemies! A conventional morality? A fantom code of honor and custom, that in this case led to death! Yet the woman was ready to die for it. Perhaps she guessed what hell it would be if she had to live with herself all her life with the memory of blood and steaming flesh before her eyes.

Had she not been in the boat the captain would never have hesitated. He had been reared in a hard school, and his code was clean and good, to certain limits. He had lost all his illusions, but the woman had lost only a few. And the man, because of what he saw in her eyes, regained some of his, and refused to draw.

The sailors went for'ard with their knives in their hands and their cracked lips set with determination. The captain knew he dared not doze off any more. There would be no need to draw if he was caught unawares.

The next morning the remaining apprentice was lying dead with his jugular slit; and the beards of the sailors were stained. Their eyes were clearer and they could talk better. Without a word the captain put the body overside before the woman should wake.

He noticed that Ranald's beard was stained too, and he shuddered in spite of the fact that he felt a sympathy. He knew a great weariness, more of the soul than the body. He felt himself slipping relentlessly toward the Chasm. He had seen much, and lived as few men had. This was a fitting end to a life of adventure. It would be so easy to let go and drift into oblivion.

Then his spirit cried out, and he forced himself to forget temptation. There was the woman. He loved her, and he must see the thing through. He had never been a quitter! Was he not in charge of the boat and pledged by the traditions of the sea to be the last one aboard? He set his teeth and remembered he held a master's ticket.

That night the blessed rain came. Only a light passing squall, but lasting long enough to fill a tank hastily made of the awning, and the water breaker. Each one quenched his thirst as he chose, the men hoggishly and with murderous eagerness, the captain alone restraining himself, and cautioning the woman.

The wisdom of this became apparent with the dawn, when the other men became violently sick and vomited for hours. One of the sailors evidently injured himself internally, for he became subject to sudden spasms of awful pain that forced his shriveled throat to scream, a throbbing, head-splitting scream. The captain and the woman, who had only moistened their lips and forced a few mouthfuls of water in their stomachs, escaped sickness, and obtained at the same time some measure of relief, especially as they soaked their garments in the rain and allowed the moisture to seep through their gaping skin-pores.

In the wake of the rain-squall had come the blessed wind—just a ripple of air, scarcely sufficient to stir the sea, but with a promise of growing stronger. Gladly the

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awning was hoisted in its rightful place, and the boat commenced to slip slowly to the south, where the far-off Marshall atolls waited and promised relief. Reassured by recent events, the captain dozed off.

With the water-hunger temporarily assuaged, and stronger after the blood-feast, the sailors began to grow more nearly normal. Their thoughts drifted on other things besides brooks and rivers. They looked on the woman and saw that she was still pretty, if eyes accustomed to the results of thirst ignored its ravages.

A thought began to seep into the sailors' brains. Unwittingly the captain was the cause of it being fanned to a flame.

He had persuaded the woman to take off her blouse and dip it in the sea when it was fairly cool at early dawn before putting it on again. By doing so she would find a little of the relief she had found when the rain had soaked into her. The sailors had roused themselves while the woman was doing this, and the sight of her soft, round breasts and curving throat in the elusive morning light had inflamed them.

They crept on her before she was aware, and her startled scream brought the captain awake with a jerk. He crawled to her side and waved his automatic threateningly. The sailors retreated, but their passions were not forgotten.

They drew Ranald aside and talked with him for a while. They made him a proposition, to which he agreed with alacrity. Then all three men came aft to where the captain sat like a blood-baked vulture, his eyes astonishingly gray in his sun-blistered face, holding the tiller with one blistered hand and his gun with the other.

RANALD it was who croaked out the words that set the captain's brain swimming and made him see a red mist where three bleared and unshaven faces should have been. A great sickness possessed him. He thought he had known the full measure of men's dirtiness, but he had never dreamed— And Ranald was her husband!

He motioned to the woman, who was watching him wistfully from amidships where the slatting sail cast a fragment of shade. She came aft slowly, and the captain's heart ached for her. That Ranald should possess her! It was a tragedy, no less. She was a woman in a thousand, and she had not broken under the ordeal she had undergone, was still undergoing. And mated to a beast!

"Your husband—has made—bargain with two men—exchange you for their—shares of water—two days," he told her in painful snatches, and winced as he saw the agony, the unbelief leap into her eyes. One claw-like hand went to her throat; the other sought her husband's arm.

"Dick—Dick!" she moaned. "You—didn't——"

He struck her savagely across the mouth and pushed her away. Her eyes sought the captain's; and only just in time he remembered that she must have at one time loved Ranald, and that he was still her husband. His hand left the butt of his automatic, and he inwardly groaned.

"Don't forget! I get—three shares—two days," croaked Ranald with glee, his hands clasping together in anticipation.

He strove to lick his lips with a tongue that was so swollen that it forced them apart. He pawed at the captain's coat with one hand that nauseated him, though he knew that his own was as bony, as thin and as dried.

One of the sailors laughed shortly and shot a glance at his companion. As if they would throw away their chance for life! Well, there was one born every minute. He would see about giving up his water when the time came for sharing out.

The other sailor had crossed to the half-fainting woman and had raised her in his arms. His brutal, inflamed face went down to meet her lips, and then something snapped in the captain's brain. He laughed and stood up, weakness falling from him. All the clean honor, morality if you will, that was essentially of him, of his race, rose and clamored for expression. He shot both the sailors dead. Then he pitched the automatic overboard and turned to Ranald.

"I'll fight you—for her," he rasped horribly. "For her—and the water. There's enough in the breaker—last two—until this wind—and it's fresh'ning—carries the boat to Majeru—at the least!"

Ranald strove to lick his lips again, and his eyes roved from the dead bodies near him to the man who stood rigidly waiting. He had been a bigger man than the captain before he had suffered, and he was certainly younger, and because of his blood-feast

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certainly stronger. Also he remembered that the automatic had gone overboard. The fight was fair, and the stakes were enough. Without a word he snatched up a stretcher and swung viciously at the captain's head.

A hand caught at his ankle and spoiled his aim, and instead of the stretcher landing on the surprized captain's skull it struck his shoulder with failing force. With a hoarse oath Ranald flung the stretcher from him, looked down and kicked his prostrate wife in the face.

Then the captain went mad. He forgot the pain in his shoulder, the agony of the prolonged thirst and the fact he was in an open boat that was dangerously rocking and flat aback in the freshening breeze. He forgot that he was a man at all; and, stirred by outlandish primal instincts, he flung himself on the face that swam in the red mist before his eyes. He was dimly aware of bony fists striking at his lips, of sounds such as man never uttered issuing from his throat; and then he found himself strangely clear-headed and calm on the bottom boards amidships with his thumbs grinding into the windpipe of a corpse.

A hand was tugging at his arm. He looked round in surprize and found the woman by him. In her eyes was horror, whether of him he could not tell for the moment.

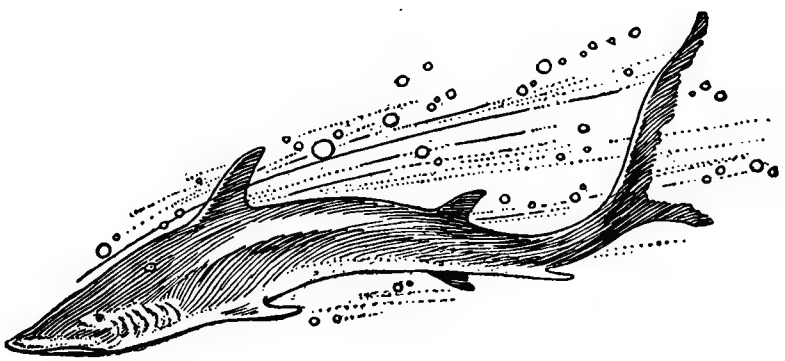
She pointed mutely to the south, and he turned his head. For a long time he did not comprehend. Coming full toward them, only her tops'ls as yet in view, was a big four-masted bark, her pyramided canvas gleaming a dull brown in the light of the sinking sun.

The woman jerked his arm again, and he looked back at her. There was no horror in her eyes, only a great light, and understanding. Her thin arms went around his neck, and she sobbed on his shoulder. He kissed her and tried to speak, but only a rattle issued from his throat.

The woman drew away and pointed at her husband's corpse. At first the captain could not understand. Would she have him held for murder?

She caught at the limp shoulders and jerked them toward the gunwale. The captain understood. He crawled over and helped her. Together they got the body overboard, and the gray nurses destroyed the evidence of the bruises on the throat. The bodies of the two sailors followed.

Huddled in each other's arms, the slatting sail above them ample signal, the man and the woman—scarcely that now—waited the rescue that swiftly approached them, and indulged in almost sane dreams!



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HARTLEY'S LUCK

by

EUGENE CUNNINGHAM

"AN' THAT was Modoc County, when your pa an' me went there to live, right after we got married. No neighbor within ten mile, not another woman in fifteen; in the Winter the bobcats an' painters a-yowlin' round the cabin. Still, I sort o' liked it, for Bud was with me. Then they made Bud sheriff, an' after that he was often gone days at a time when he had a case."

Abigail Crowley straightened up to her full five nine, a gaunt, sinewy figure with hard-lined, sallow face. Her gnarled, sinewy hands, big as a man's, dripped suds upon the snowy kitchen floor as she stared blankly at the rain-washed window beyond her washtubs.

Martha, at the table across the little room, let her books slide into a heap as she listened for the thousandth time to the story of her father's death. Outside, the November gale shrieked crazily, leaning against the little cottage like a palpable wall, setting joints to dismal creaking. The battering rain drummed on the shingles, as if in accompaniment to the tale.

"Bud started out on a Tuesday, to look into a hoss-theft; Friday night they brought him home. Just riddled with forty-fours, he was. No doubt about who'd done it—'Three Finger' Hartley an' two Greasers was loose in the neighborhood. Besides, Hartley got drunk next day an' bragged to some ranch-hands how they'd waylaid Bud an' drilled him from behind——"

An icy glint came into the faded blue eyes; the angular, toil-worn figure was erect as a rapier.

"And the money, motherdy," prompted Martha breathlessly. "Pa had——"

"Seventy-five hundred in bills. He'd finished up the hoss-theft business an' drew the money out o' bank before startin' home. It was to pay for the farm we'd picked out; Neilson's farm, 't was—Hartley's gang got the roll. They took ever'thing he had; money, his six-guns; Hartley—why, that skunk even traded hats because Bud was wearin' a new Stetson he'd just got from Sacramento."

Martha sighed and picked up her algebra again.

"Seventy-five hundred, at four per cent. for ten years—eleven thousand dollars!"she mused sadly. "If we had it now, you'd not need to work like you do, motherdy; I could go to college——"

"Sure. But— Well, we'll keep a-pluggin', Marthy. Mebbe there'll be a way turn up yet. As for the work—why, honey, I don't mind it a bit. 'Tain't nothin' to the work I used to do, when ye was little an' Bud an' me was savin' that seventy-five hundred. This washin' business pays mighty well an' I'm stronger'n a hoss. But if I'd got my hands on Hartley——"

Martha peeped fascinated over the algebra at her mother's strong, grim figure. She remembered the story told her years ago, before they had moved to this little house in Mill Valley. How her mother, when Bud Crowley's body had been laid in

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the parlor, had saddled a horse and with Bud's Winchester and her own six-shooter, had scoured the hills for trace of Hartley and his Mexicans. Martha had been but six at the time of her father's death; her memory of those black days was dim. But since then she had watched her mother struggle manfully to provide for them. Her own blue eyes filled with sudden tears as she looked; she ducked behind the book, for Abigail detested tears.

"Listen to the wind!" she said a little later. "It bangs against the house like something alive. That thumping——"

"Somebody a-knockin'," grunted Abigail decidedly. "Front door. Now, who on the earth'd be out on a nasty night like this!"

She moved briskly through the door leading to the front room, wiping sudsy hands on her checked apron. Martha heard the front door open, then a furious blast of wind entered that seemed to lift everything movable in the house. The door banged shut, and her mother's voice sounded, echoed by a man's rumbling bass.

"Mighty mean night to be out, stranger. Come into the kitchen an' dry yourself."

"Lost my way. This cursed rain blinds a man."

Abigail reentered the light kitchen, with a hulking, sodden figure trailing behind her. Martha could see little of the stranger's features, for an old slouch hat was pulled well down over his eyes, the collar of his dripping mackinaw was turned up almost to his ears. She caught a glancing view of hooked nose and beady eyes, with a wilderness of stubbly black beard.

"Your man home?" mumbled the man.

Abigail answered dryly, without turning from the chair she was pulling up before the stove:

"Ain't got no man. Here, set yourself, stranger. Better shuck that coat. Hungry?"

She was a woman of the Old West, and it takes more than the bitter grip of poverty to kill the instinct of hospitality. The man, pulling off his hat and slipping stiffly from the coat, grinned wolfishly. Martha shivered involuntarily at sight of his full face. It was utterly brutal, an evil, dissipated mask.

"I'd say I am! Nothin' to eat since mornin'. Been on the go since daylight. Reckon about a quart o' coffee'd hit the spot dead center."

He began to glance about curiously, with an odd mixture of furtiveness and boldness, while Abigail drew the big coffee-pot to the front of the stove. His eyes wandered to Martha, staring at him with youthful intentness. Suddenly he scowled.

"What yuh starin' about, kid? Reckon yuh'll remember my mug?"

"Excuse me!" stammered the girl. "I didn't mean to stare——"

"Oh, 't's all right," he growled more amiably. "Don't make no particular difference, I reckon, if yuh do take my measure. So yuh live here all by your lone, do yuh?"

"Uh-huh. Me an' my daughter. Here ye are, stranger. Eat hearty."

She set dishes on the stove-apron and he fell to like a famished animal, gulping and smacking. For minutes there was no word spoken, then he wiped his plate with a great square of corn bread, swallowed the bread in two gulps and leaned back comfortably, to stare from Abigail to Martha.

"Well, I feel lots better. ——! That's a tail-twister of a storm. Don't know when I see a worse. Now, reckon we might's well put our cards on the table."

A subtly threatening note had crept into his hoarse voice. His black eyes hardened as they shuttled from mother to daughter.

"I'm on the jump. There was a posse mighty close to my heels this afternoon, but I reckon I shook 'em in the storm. But they're watchin' all the roads an' ferries; they'd nab me if I tried a getaway toward Sausalito or out o' here anyway. So I'm goin' to hole up here with yuh for tonight—mebbe for part o' tomorrow. See?"

"Look here!" blazed Abigail, whirling from her tubs. "Ye can't run no blazers on me!"

"Shut up!" he snarled. "I ain't kiddin' yuh a bit when I say I'm a bad *hombre* to monkey with! They're chasin' me for a killin' in Sacramento County, an' for some other little jobs. I don't figger on stretchin' rope if I can help it, an' no fool woman can stand in my way. Yuh keep your trap shut, see?"

With a motion like a sleight-of-hand performer's, a long-barreled Colt came from under his shirt. Almost absently Abigail noted that it had no trigger; he held the big hammer at half-cock with his thumb. She knew the marks of the real gunman;

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this fugitive was master of the weapon. Sullenly she glared at him, then shrugged.

"Ye got the drop. What ye say goes—s' long's ye keep it!"

"Don't yuh worry none about that! I'll keep it, all right, all right. Look here! In case yuh think o' tryin' a trick——"

He holstered the gun beneath his shirt, dropped his hand to his side, then with a movement almost too rapid for the eye to follow, brought it out, performed the double roll, the road-agent spin. Three times he went through the sinister pantomime, seeming to increase the dazzling speed with each evolution.

"There! An' I sleep like a wolf; least noise wakes me *an' I wake shootin'!* I never seen the man could best me shootin'. Don't yuh forget!"

Deliberately he stood up, yawned, unbuttoned his flannel shirt, stripped it off and revealed a filthy undershirt beneath, with the holster slung over the left shoulder by an arm-loop, its toe held against the chest by a web-band, the black gun-butt slanting forward. A blanket, part of a drying wash, hung upon a line near the stove, dry now. He reached for it, hauled it down and draped it about his shoulders like a poncho.

Abigail, staring fiercely at him, suddenly caught her breath. Instantly she recovered herself, but a cold chill seemed to settle about her heart, to be replaced almost immediately by a hot rage that was harder to suppress. The hand which had reached for the blanket had the second finger chopped off just above the palm.

"Five feet ten; weight one hundred seventy; black hair and eyes; three fingers on right hand." She remembered the description given in the newspapers.

"Three Finger" Hartley! She had read of his sensational escape from guards while on the way to the death-chamber in San Quentin a year before; had heard something of the dozen or more major crimes committed since his escape; of his apparent invulnerability to capture. Now, by an ironical move of Fate, of Providence, her husband's murderer sat in her kitchen, bullying her.

A pocket of the mackinaw discharged a quart bottle. Hartley pulled the cork and tilted the bottle. He set it down, and Abigail, who feared nothing on earth for herself, suddenly trembled for another. For his brightened eyes had turned with a curious intentness upon Martha's slim, frightened figure. She was only sixteen; nothing like this had ever come into her life before; her face was like ashes; she shrank tremblingly behind the barricade of books.

Hartley seemed vastly amused at sight of her panic. He got up and moved about the kitchen, glancing curiously at everything. He pulled down the shade over the window, then the door into the bedroom caught his eye. He turned to Abigail.

"What's in there?"

"Bedroom."

"Let's see. Go inside an' turn on the light. Go slow an' don't make no quick motions, if yuh like your health."

When the bedroom light had been switched on, he peered cautiously around the door jamb. Over the bed hung an enlarged crayon portrait of Bud Crowley. Hartley sucked in his breath audibly at sight of the lean, pleasant face, the steady eyes.

"Who's that?" he snapped.

"That? That's my dead husband, Bud Crowley. The man ye didn't have sand enough in your craw to meet to his face! The man ye hid up to shoot in the back! Oh, I know ye, Hartley! I wish to God I had a gun! Ye'd never hang."

So menacing was her working face, her blazing eyes, that his clawlike right hand shot to gun-butt, half-drew the weapon. Then he shoved it back and began to laugh uproariously.

"Can yuh beat luck!" he roared. "Bud Crowley's woman, an' here I sashay into her place. Out o' the whole State o' California, I bust in on her! It's rich!

"'I wish to Gawd I had a gun!'" he mimicked her. "Say, there ain't no Gawd—not like the gospelcers tell yuh, anyhow. Yuh're out o' luck, old woman! This here—" he patted the Colt—"is the gawd I'm bettin' on. Never fell down on me yet. Now, come on out! Leave the light a-burnin'."

When she was back at her washtubs Hartley returned to his bottle, his sides quivering. From time to time he chuckled, "It's rich!" while Abigail glowered. Martha still huddled in her chair, staring at the outlaw with horrified fascination. To sit in the presence of her father's murderer! It was horrible.

The girl's unwinking gaze finally worked

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on Hartley. He turned, grinned at her, got up and lurched across to her chair. She leaped up terrified, but his left hand shot out and closed about her wrist.

"Don't be runnin' away when I come toward yuh!" he snarled, and jerked her toward him.

In that instant a clawing, scratching whirlwind struck him. Teeth fastened in the hand that held Martha's wrist. Abigail fought snarlingly, like a great cat. Her gaunt, muscular body was almost as strong as his. He fended her off desperately, hammering his fists upon her head, her shoulders, striking just as at a man. She paid no heed to his blows, and her nails brought the blood from his face and neck. At last he managed to swing the girl into her mother; their heads banged together with stunning force, and he hurled them with a single motion into a corner. They crashed into the wall and toppled to the floor, while he stood gasping oaths, dabbing at the blood that ran from a cut on his forehead into his eyes. The women made no effort to rise; they lay panting where they had fallen.

He dropped into the chair again, watching them, rubbing his bitten left hand. The bottle was on the stove-apron. He picked it up and the liquor gurgled; then he glared at them.

"Just for that, I'm a-goin' to tie yuh up pretty soon," he snarled. "Yuh'll stay hog-tied till tomorrow mornin'. An' if yuh try any more rough-housin', yuh'll both get hurt—bad. I take no more chances with yuh."

Again he tilted the bottle and with the sound of the whisky running down his throat—that seemed somehow a sinister echo of the hammering storm-fists upon the frail walls of the kitchen—Abigail knew panic. Hartley drunk would be far worse than Hartley sober; thought of Martha at the mercy of this brute was maddening. She grew cold with deadly apprehension. Then, in the moment of her greatest dread, her practical brain began to pull and haul at the circumstances. She was the type which dies with flailing arms, with face set immovably to the front.

Her gun! Hidden beneath the layer of clothing in the middle drawer of her dresser lay her revolver. No toy weapon, either; a single-action frontier Colt of six-inch barrel, using soft-nosed steeljackets of rifle length. But the dresser was in the bedroom; how to get to it? She moved slightly, and Hartley jerked the bottle from his lips, passed it swiftly from right hand to left. The clawlike right disappeared under the edge of the blanket; he glared at her with red-rimmed eyes.

He was watchful as a wild animal; cunning after the fashion of the hunted beast. If she was to do anything, it must be by guile, greater than that which even the liquor left untouched in his crooked brain. Again she moved slightly, and this time groaned as if in agony. Martha stirred and turned a blanched face upon her mother. Hartley glared for an instant, then a malicious grin of satisfaction curled his gash of a mouth.

"Hurt much, motherdy?" breathed Martha, and Abigail looked at the girl.

Martha's trim middy blouse was now a wreck; the wide collar was torn almost clear of the neck; her soft brown hair straggled in wisps over her shoulders. Across one temple was a long scratch, where the outlaws clutching nails had brought blood through the snowy skin. Genuine pity for the child moved the mother. For herself, she was tough as whipcord; in a fist-fight with Hartley the outlaw could have bested her only with difficulty. But her daughter had known no such stern training as the frontier had given Abigail. This situation was undreamed of by her. Abigail laid a gnarled hand upon the girl's face, very tenderly.

"Nothin' much the matter with me, honey," she said reassuringly, so low that Hartley couldn't understand. "Just a mite wrenched."

She raised her voice.

"Why, your face is a-bleedin' bad, honey. Lemme wipe it clean."

Hartley watched, with a sneer. He tilted the bottle to his lips, but kept an eye upon them. Deftly, and with an expression of deep concern upon her sallow features, Abigail wiped the thin trickle of blood from Martha's cheek, keeping her eyes fixed upon the girl, but conscious always of Hartley's slightest movement.

"There, honey. Now, if I just had some court-plaster——"

"Court-plaster, ——!" mocked Hartley, and drank again; then cocked his head to watch once more.

Stiffly, pretending a shakiness her steady

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nerves had never known, Abigail got up, raising herself by desperate clawing at the wall. Erect, she tottered, and let her gaunt body sag against the wall for an instant. Now was the desperate moment. Would he let her out of the room? Lurchingly she inched toward the bedroom door, while the man watched her in indecision. His lips parted to order her back, but she paid him no outward heed, moved as if almost unable to keep going toward the door. He got to his feet, sinister right hand still curving about the gun-butt beneath the blanket, and followed her.

In the bedroom, still carrying out the pretense of almost overwhelming weakness, Abigail pulled out drawer after drawer of Martha's chiffonier. Hartley leaned against the door-facing, shooting alternate glances at her and at the cowering girl outside, who had never moved from where she had dropped.

From the chiffonier, feeling a bit more secure since he had made no move to stop her, Abigail reeled across the room to her dresser. She opened the top drawer, moved the things about in the motions of searching, palmed the little tin of court-plaster. Her eyes lifted stealthily to the tiny mirror upon the wall. She could see Hartley dimly, his eyes turned toward her. Then his head turned slowly; he was staring at Martha.

Abigail slipped open the middle drawer, without ceasing to watch the faint reflection of the back of his head. Her fingers found the gun; lifted it— Still he made no move. She raised it along the front of her dress. Should she whirl and fire? Her muscles tensed. But there wasn't time. He was turning. Deftly, she slipped the weapon inside the bosom of her dress, felt the muzzle catch in the waist-band.

"Say!" snarled Hartley impatiently. "Ain't yuh found that —— plaster yet?"

"I got it," she answered meekly, and faced him.

He moved back to his chair by the stove, watching her produce the tin, unroll the plaster and cover the scratch on Martha's face. He drank in leisurely, audible gulps; the bottom of his bottle was nearly uncovered; he treasured the remnant. At last it was finished. He rose and stretched luxuriously; hurled the empty bottle across the room and watched it shiver to pieces against the wall. He laughed loudly when Martha flinched shudderingly at the crash.

From his mackinaw he hauled out tobacco and papers. When his cigaret was made he looked about him for matches. They were in a tin safe on the wall above the stove and to reach them he must rise. He stared at the safe reflectively, then grinned maliciously and turned upon the women. His eyes rested upon Martha.

"Come here, kid!" he snarled. "Come here an' get me a match."

Abigail started to get up. Hartley flipped aside the blanket, showed the hand gripped about the stock of his gun. His upper lip lifted wolfishly above yellow teeth.

"Si' down!" he thundered. "Who the —— talked to yuh? I'm a vis'tor," he added with grim humor, "an' I won't have old hens waitin' on me. Get me a match, kid, or——"

Trembling violently, the girl dragged herself to her feet and moved by a wide circle to the stove. Her fingers fumbled stiffly with the match-safe, then she extended him a handful of matches. He snatched at them, grinning at her fear. Abigail gritted her teeth in impotent fury. The odds were still too long; his hand had never left the gun.

"Now, get me a drink o' water," he commanded, and obediently Martha moved toward the sink.

"That's enough!" cried Abigail. "Cain't ye see the pore child's about to drop?"

"Shut up!" he tossed to her. "Don't yuh be buttin' in. Yuh might's well *sabe* right now that I'd drill yuh quick's I would a man. One time down in Arizona a Mex' woman gi' me some lip—over a drink o' water it was, too—an' started to yank a knife. Well, she finished pullin' her sticker t' other side the river."

He snorted contemptuously.

"I've heerd folks say there's somethin' awful about drillin' a woman. ——! No difference far's *I* see. Never felt a bit different about that Mex' woman. Same's a man, exactly. So don't yuh think your bein' a woman'd slow my draw a speck. An' yuh better believe what I told yuh about my gun-play! I ain't never see any man could stand up against me with a six-gun."

"No," sneered Abigail, "how could ye? They'd have to turn round to see ye, seein's ye always shoot from behind their backs."

He merely grinned.

"There was a bird over in Sacramento

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County learned different," he grunted. "What yuh waitin' on, Clumsy? Bring that water!"

Then, in an evil moment for him, Tabby, Martha's old gray cat, rose from his cushion beneath the stove. Not storms, inside or out, had disturbed Tabby's slumbers. Leisurely he moved toward the center of the room. Suddenly, warned perhaps by some lagging instinct of the tense atmosphere, he whirled and spat at the hulking figure beside the stove; then streaked for the bedroom door.

But the outlaw, grinning evilly at sight of the big cat, had moved as quickly as Tabby. The gun flashed out, the muzzle dropped to intercept Tabby's line of retreat. A deafening roar, and Tabby yowled in anguish as he disappeared through the door. Upon the floor lay his long tail, or most of it, severed by the bullet.

"You coward!" flamed the girl. "You coward! I could kill you!"

"Shut up!" chuckled Hartley. "Come on with that water. How'd ye like to see your ma dancin' around, huh? Better hustle with that drink."

Her momentary flash expired as suddenly as it had been born. Martha's face whitened at the implied threat; she moved laggingly toward him and held out the cup at extreme arm's length. But he would have no such coyness. His left hand captured hers, dragged her to him. His eyes were steadily fixed upon Abigail, and she writhed. Closer came the straining girl; still he watched her mother, grinning. Then desperately Martha swung her left hand, brought it stingingly against his cheek.

He grunted in commingled pain and astonishment, and loosed gun-butt to snatch at her furiously. She repeated the blow, struggling against him wildly. Then from Abigail came a grim, triumphant snarl.

"Turn loose her!"

Hartley's grip relaxed for an instant, and Martha leaped clear and whirled. Abigail was on her feet, and one steady hand held the long Colt, trained upon the outlaw's breast.

"Stick up your hands!" she cried, and with the words the spell left Hartley.

He swore viciously, and his hand shot up to his weapon. Martha, staring at her mother with dilated pupils, caught the shadow of his movement; her face twisted in an agony of fear. She screamed.

"Mother!"

But Abigail's finger had squeezed the trigger at the instant when Hartley's three-fingered hand closed upon his gun-butt, jerked the big Colt clear of the holster. There was an odd expression of near-panic upon the outlaw's stubbled, brutal face. Perhaps he lost some of his boasted speed on the draw, for there was nothing of the amateur about Abigail's pose.

The report was very loud, the echoes reverberating in the narrow confines of the kitchen. Martha's scream was cut short by the sound; followed by the crash of Hartley's gun to the floor. Abigail stood watching fixedly, her grim face tense as a sleepwalker's. Martha stared unbelievingly at her mother's stiff figure. Then Hartley groaned, and bent slowly forward. Abigail streaked forward and kicked his gun across the room. As she lowered her gaze to the floor, she saw that Hartley's foot was gushing blood; a widening pool reddened the planks beneath the boot-sole. Dazed, she stared for an instant. He leaned back in the chair and groaned again, and her staring eyes saw no trace of a wound about his trunk. Yet she had aimed squarely at his breast—

"Mother!" gasped Martha. "You aren't hurt?"

Slowly Abigail shook her head. She was still agape with surprize.

"I—I tried to tell you! I— Oh, motherdy! Your gun is filled with blanks. Not a bullet in it. It hasn't been reloaded since I used it last month in the frontier play at high school. I—I thought he'd kill you! I——"

She hid her face in her hands and broke into relieved tears, crying gaspingly.

"Blanks!" mumbled Abigail dully. "Then how——"

She scurried across the room and picked up Hartley's gun, kept the muzzle upon him while she worked the ejector. *Two* exploded shells dropped out; at the third push of the plunger a live shell dropped out. She twirled the cylinder and replaced the cartridge, stared fascinated at the bleeding foot.

"Ye shot yourself!" she breathed awedly. "I've seen cowboys do it, makin' a quick draw from the hip. The thumb slips off the hammer when the muzzle's pointin' at the foot an' the gun goes off. Ye shot yourself, Three Finger! An' my gun was

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blanked! An' awhile ago ye said there ain't no God! Lord! How Bud Crowley must be a-laughin' at ye this minute, from Up Yonder——

"Marthy!" she whirled upon her daughter briskly, a practical glint replacing the awed expression of an instant before. "Throw on your slicker an' a hat an' hike down the road to Marshal Brown's house. Get him here on the scoot! I'll keep an eye on this trash. Don't let Jim Brown get ye to talkin. Bring him here an' I'll do the talkin' for him an' me both. Now, run!"

TWENTY-FIVE minutes later the door opened to let Martha and Marshal James Brown into the kitchen. Brown was an old-timer, one-time deputy of Bud Crowley, a stanch friend to Abigail. His eyes were gleaming excitedly and with sight of the sullen Hartley, now bandaging his wound with an old petticoat of Abigail's, he let out a delighted whoop.

"Three Finger!" he yelled. "This is shore a sight for sore eyes! Tell me all about it, Abby. Marthy, she wouldn't say nothin' but that yuh was ridin' herd on the sidewinder. Told me yuh'd do all the talkin."

"An' I will! I heard somethin' about the family o' that Sacramento man he killed offerin' ten thousand dollars for Hartley. Also, I understand there's about five thousand more offered by the S. P. How about it?"

"Right!" grinned the marshal. "An' if it's the last thing I ever set my paw to, I'm goin' to see that yuh get it. He robbed pore old Bud, after downin' him from behind, an' it's shore plain justice that he'd a-payin' yuh back now. But tell me how yuh got the drop on him. He's s'posed to be right-handed lightnin' on the draw."

Tersely, with no regard for dramatics, Abigail explained. The marshal listened with little grunts and whistles of admiration, astonishment, and at the last, something of awe shone in his round blue eyes.

"By Christopher!" he breathed reverently. "Your gun was full o' blanks an' if his hand hadn't slipped—for the first time in his life—he'd 'a' drilled yuh! Abby, even if yuh'd had real lead in them shells o' yours, he'd shore got yuh. Just because his thumb slipped, yuh got by. Yuh shore had your rabbit foot with yuh!

"Now, I got my Ford outside an' me an' this bird'll take a little trip. Why, what's ailin' yuh, Abby?"

For Abigail was glaring with grim scorn from marshal to outlaw. Now she sniffed acidly. She was a woman who regarded the superiority of man as no more than a story-book fiction.

"What ye said's the matter, Jim Henry Brown! I've had to listen to him braggin', an' now ye come to tell me what a skinny chanst I'd 've had if his thumb hadn't slipped, *even* if my gun'd been loaded. Who was the best shot ye ever see, Jim Henry Brown? Answer me that, will ye?"

"Bud Crowley!" responded the marshal heartily. "Best I ever see. He——"

"I ain't a-knockin' Bud a bit. He was there three ways from the jack when it come to makin' a gun shoot where he held it. But Bud taught me——"

Hartley's big gun was hanging loosely at her side. Over the sink hung a tin cup, the same cup that Martha had used to bring Hartley a drink. Abigail whirled; the big gun flipped up to hip-height and roared. The tin cup, twelve feet away, clattered into the sink, for the nail which had held it was driven clean through the wall.

"By Christopher!" the marshal half-whispered, gaping at the black hole, his round blue eyes blinking frantically. "By Christopher! I take it all back, Abby. Honest, I swaller ever' bit! *He* was the lucky one that your gun was blanked. Otherwise, I'd have to send for a hearse!"

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The CUSHIONS

by MAX BONTER

Author of "The Commissary in the Hills," "N'Yawk and Elsware," etc.

"GOT any rods, boys?"

A long-limbed man wearing a slouch hat had swung nimbly aboard the tank-car and accosted the two hoboes before either of them could make a movement toward escape. The lad's muscles grew suddenly tense. He took breath sharply, quivering like a frightened colt. His companion gripped his forearm with strong and subduing fingers.

"Easy, kid," admonished the older hobo firmly. "Don't try no unloadin' stunt. Ya'd on'y git croaked. Ain't ya wise dat de bull's heeled?"

"Brooklyn" Joe's logic and his calm deportment in the face of danger reassured the boy, whose excitement thereupon subsided. The railroad detective passed a swift hand over their pockets, at the same time scanning their features with the aid of an electric flashlight.

"We's on'y two blokes headin' West fur de Winter," explained Brooklyn Joe. "We ain't hard-boil' guys, an' we don't carry no gats. I got a shiv in me kick, but it's wrap' up in paper 'cordin' ta reg'lations."

The officer smiled and stepped back.

"I guess you boys are all right," he responded. "But you'll find it pretty cold ridin'."

He swung easily from the tank-car, and the long freight drag rumbled slowly out of South Bend, Indiana, and proceeded on its way West.

"Kid," advised Brooklyn Joe solemnly, "never try ta make a gitaway atter a bull gits close ta ya. Dat gives him a ixcuse ta plug ya—see?"

The boy remained silent, holding the tank-rail and stamping vigorously in an attempt to keep warm. His hands were bare and blue; he wore no overcoat; his clothing was of the silly city-sport type. Brooklyn Joe, observing these indications of callowness, experienced a sudden twinge of compassion in his calloused heart. A keen midnight wind, straight from the icy shores of Lake Michigan, whined over the flat terrane, that sparkled in the starlight with a three-inch blanket of November snow. Even the hardened hobo, inured to the life after years of similar exposure and protected against the cold by pads of newspaper wrapped about his body beneath his clothes, felt constrained to emphasize his chilliness by an occasional chattered curse.

"Kid," he burst out at last, "if we don't unload we'll freeze ta deat'!"

The drag was creeping slowly forward on the heels of another train that was traversing the next block. Brooklyn Joe swung deftly from the tank; but the boy in attempting to follow suit stumbled and fell into the snow.

"The Cushions," copyright, 1922, by Max Bonter.

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"Gee!" he exclaimed wonderingly. "I feel as if I didn't have any hands or feet!"

The old hobo did not waste any time.

"Off wit' dem kicks!" he commanded.

Blowing fiercely upon his own chilled fingers to restore circulation, he then unlaced the boy's shoes, pulled off his sox and covered his bare feet with snow. Alternately and with vigor, for half an hour he rubbed the boy's hands and feet with the snow. He rubbed until his arms ached.

"Feel anyt'ing now, kid?" he demanded.

"Sure, but they hurt," replied the boy.

"Put on y'ur kicks an' y'ur sox," directed the old hobo shortly. "Y'u're lucky ya got any han's or feet left."

Brooklyn Joe speedily demolished a section of rail fence, cut some splinters from one of the rails with his clasp knife and quickly built a fire on the right of way. The wind still whined over the prairie, and the east was scarcely perceptibly illuminating the area of dawn. Over their fire the two wanderers sat crouching, with a great thankfulness in their hearts for the approach of day.

"Kid, w'at in —— ever put ya on de bum?"

Joe deftly twisted a cigaret, sucked a light into its tip from a bit of coal and exhaled a fragrant cloud through his nostrils.

"Got a smoke to spare?" asked the boy eagerly.

"I never toin a guy down fur de makin's," replied Joe. "But I axed ya a question."

The old hobo finally took the tobacco and paper from the lad's inexperienced fingers, rolled the cigaret himself and stuck it between the other's teeth. Joe's ministrations finally pierced his companion's reticence.

"My name's Lawrence Durham, and they're looking for me in New York," said the boy with a slight quiver in his voice. "My mother lives on East Sixty-First Street. But you won't give me away, will you?"

Brooklyn Joe's wizened visage wrinkled into a grin of understanding.

"Dur'm, hey?" he repeated. "Dat's de name o' de makin's. I kin remember dat name. Mine's Joe Davis, an' dey call me 'Brooklyn Joe.' I been t'oity years on de bum, an' I never squealed on a guy yet. Is y'ur ol' man dead, kid?"

"My father? No—divorced."

"Devoised, hey?" repeated the old hobo thoughtfully. "Him an' de ol' woman couldn't pull tagedder wit' deir legs inside de traces, hey? Dat's bad, kid."

Lawrence flushed.

"We heard dad came to Chicago," he went on. "I'm going to try to find him."

"Ain't ya got de street nummer?"

"No," admitted the boy.

"Den y'u've got a job ahead uv ya," grinned the old hobo. "Chi's a big town. How did ya happen ta git dis far?"

"I had money when I left New York, but I fell asleep on the train and somebody robbed me. Money and ticket and all. I got put off the train at Cleveland. Then I pawned my overcoat and got on a freight-train."

"An' ya rode de cushions frum N' Yawk ta Cleveland, hey?" mused Brooklyn Joe. "Kid, I bin troo ev'ry State in dis Union, an' I ain't never rode de cushions yet. How's dat?"

Lawrence stared.

"I ain't kiddin' ya," persisted the hobo earnestly. "I've beat me way over ev'ry railroad in dis country, an' never coughed up a nickel carfare."

A curious smile lighted the boy's blue eyes, and their depths showed a sudden glimmer of wildness.

"I'd sooner ride a freight, myself!" he exclaimed impulsively.

It was Joe's turn to stare.

"W'at's dat?" queried the hobo shrilly and incredulously. "Ya mean y'u'd rather sit out here in de snow half froze ta deat' wit' a hungry gut dan be travelin' on de inside nice an' warm on de cushions?"

Lawrence sat erect, rubbing his chilled hands and puffing the last whiffs out of his cigaret. He looked at the beady eyes and bulldog chin of the little tramp on the other side of the fire. Then he sniffed the oxygen out of the freezing air, while his boyish gaze swept the star-set heaven and lighted on the first pale streamers of the dawn.

"Sure," he replied, nodding his head slowly and emphatically. "That's just what I mean."

II

POLICE MAGISTRATE McCARDELL, leaning slightly forward over his desk, scanned the prisoner's battered features with close attention.

"Davis," he asked impressively, "are you telling me the *whole* truth?"

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The little hobo's face was a pitiable sight. The area embracing his eye-sockets and the bridge of his nose was markedly discolored and swollen. There were bruises on both cheeks. A lump as big as a hen's egg appeared on one side of his jaw. Speech was both painful and difficult.

"Hones', judge," he mumbled. "Dis kid's on de level. I don' carry no nurs'ry wit' me on de road. I never saw de kid in me life till I spots 'im in Elk'art, unloadin' de wrong way offa freight. He nearly gits croaked, so I t'inks I'll wise 'im up a li'l bit. I brings 'im inta Chi."

"Did you see this officer fire the shot?"

"Sure, y'uronner."

"The boy attempted to run, did he not?"

"De kid was noivus. He was unloadin' in de freight yard, an' de bull yells ta us ta stop. I stan's me groun', but de kid tries ta make a gitaway—see?"

The magistrate pondered.

"Did you call up the hospital?" he asked an attendant. "If so, what did they say?"

"They say the boy will recover," replied the attendant.

"Now, Davis," continued the judge, "you claim that you know this boy's name and address; but you refuse to impart the information. Do you realize that it is within my power to sentence you to a year in the penitentiary for vagrancy and trespass?"

A stubborn light flashed suddenly out of Brooklyn Joe's battered eyes. A scowl of defiance that embraced the judge, the plain-clothes men, the uniformed policemen, the court attachés and all the witnesses, spread over his maltreated but resolute face.

"Y'uronner," he replied shrilly, "ya kin t'row me in de can fur de res' of me life, but I tell ya straight dat I ain't gonna squeal on *no* guy! De kid axes me ta keep me mout' shut, an' I gives 'im me woid dat I *will!*"

The big Chicago courtroom had become unusually quiet, and interested looks were directed by the police-court reporters toward Brooklyn Joe. The puzzled magistrate adopted different tactics.

"Davis," he demanded, "do you imagine you are doing this lad a favor by keeping your mouth shut? Don't you understand that he is a minor and that his parents must be notified of his plight in order that they can render him asistance?"

"Dat's all right, judge," returned Joe promptly. "De kid comes frum de Eas', an' he tells me de town an' de name uv de street his mudder lives on. I kin make dis town in two days an' not'fy de kid's fam'ly. I kin be back here in anudder two days."

"Do you mean," persisted the magistrate, "that you will go personally and notify this lad's mother of his condition and whereabouts, and that you will immediately return here and present yourself before this court for trial?"

"Sure t'ing, judge," replied the hobo unhesitatingly.

For some seconds the magistrate measured the physiognomy of the prisoner in front of him.

"You say this man offered resistance?" he suddenly queried, turning to the complaining witness.

The railroad detective sullenly nodded.

"Then why isn't the fact cited in the complaint?" pursued the judge.

The "dick" was silent.

"Why did you resist arrest?" continued his honor, turning again toward Brooklyn Joe.

A scornful smile appeared on the prisoner's swollen countenance.

"I been t'oity years on de road, judge," he admitted, "an' I been troo ev'ry State in dis Union. I got more sense dan ta stack up agen' a bull dat's heeled."

"Then how did your face happen to get in such a state?"

"I fell offa me bunk in de jail," replied Joe glibly.

A ripple of mirth swept suddenly over the courtroom, being almost instantly checked, however, by the magistrate's sharp rap for order. A slow rage seemed to be gathering in his bosom. His usually calm face reddened slightly, and he removed and polished his glasses. Having replaced the latter upon his nose, he bent stern eyes upon the railroad detective and several burly uniformed figures that stood near by. The officers did not seem to be quite at ease. Their looks were directed covertly at one another or upon the floor.

"Mr. Davis," said the magistrate at last in clear and incisive tones that cut the still air of the courtroom like a lash, "notwithstanding the fact that you are a tramp, I believe you to be a man of principle. I would that all our officers of the law were equally so. The charge against you is practically only in the nature of a technicality. I postpone your hearing until four days hence and parole you until such time."

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III

EASTWARD from La Salle Street at a quarter to six pulled the most famous train in America, if not in the world. November's short span of daylight had reached its close, and the lights of the Windy City were struggling persistently through the murk. As the flier sped along through the subway, none but a keen and penetrative eye could have discerned the dim outlines of the dead-head passenger who clung to the second blind back from the engine. Brooklyn Joe was small and inconspicuous. His clothing and cap were of dark material, and the color of his shirt was black. He had unbuckled the heavy leather belt that he wore, looped it around one of the iron ladder rungs that were screwed into the end of the car, and then rebuckled it—so that now, held firm to a station of safety, he could thrust his chilled hands deep into his pants pockets and hunch his shoulders protectively around his exposed neck.

The train rolled swiftly away from Chicago's suburbs and began rushing past the southern end of Lake Michigan. Fifty, sixty, seventy miles an hour—at times even eighty. And there were certain short and straight-away stretches, where the engineer was sure of his roadbed, where the flier made ninety and a hundred. Black night, with neither a moon nor a star, seemed constantly rushing forward to meet her.

Joe had stationed himself on the south side of the train, because the depot at Elkhart lay on the north side of the track and he wished to elude the prying eyes of the station detective. The vestibule beside him and the car ahead of him acted as a combined wind-break. He was really not uncomfortably cold—although discomfort, in a tramp's vocabulary, would be synonomous with civilized suffering. He even dozed, allowing his body to sway unhindered from side to side—buckled to security by his heavy belt. Hanging suspended to the side of a machine that was scheduled to hurtle across country a thousand miles in twenty hours, Brooklyn Joe felt as tranquil as a babe in a crib.

"An' dey's guys dat say ya can't ride de Cenchree," he muttered to himself in drowsy contemptuousness. "Dey ain't 'boes—dey's on'y pike stiffs."

The magnificent train swept over Indiana till her air-brakes ground her to a stop at Elkhart. Joe played a little game of hide-and-seek with the station detective. He unbuckled himself from the ladder, espied a vigilant form striding along the trainside toward him, suddenly flung up his hands to the top of the vestibule and pulled his body gymnastically across it and down on the station side. A baggageman saw him, but kept a closed mouth.

The sleuth walked to the head of the train and came back along the station side. Joe nimbly swung himself back to his former station on the south side of the vestibule. The darkness, his diminutive stature, his dark apparel, his cat-like agility—such quartet of considerations was crowning his adventure with success.

A soft jar and the whistle of escaping air took the tension from his nerves.

"De noo enjine's hooked her," he muttered happily. "Now we's all set fur T'ledo."

The hobo rebuckled himself to the ladder; the conductor's shrill " 'Board!" swept along the platform, and a moment later the Century was hurling herself again eastward into the night.

At Toledo Joe played pranks again with the station detective, whisking himself back and forth over the vestibule in order to avoid discovery. His movements were so quiet and nimble and his person so inconspicuous that the official was hoodwinked as completely as his colleague at Elkhart had been. As he walked importantly along the station platform, his fat shoulders swaying from side to side and a half-frown of conscious officialdom darkening his face, Joe emitted a scornful chuckle.

"Dem bulls ain't nuttin' but big lazy bums," he muttered. "Dey don' savvy anyt'ing but beatin' a guy up w'en dey knows de guy ain't got a come-back."

The little hobo passed his hands ruefully over his swollen face and then thrust them into his pockets. The train pounded away toward Cleveland, and her dead-head passenger dropped into a fitful doze.

The Century went through Rochester just before daybreak, and Brooklyn Joe was still riding the second blind back. The hobo began briskly to rub the sleepiness out of his eyes.

"Dis is sure been a lead-pipe cinch so fur," he muttered, "but atter dis I gotta

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watch me step. It'll be daylight w'en we get inta Serrycoos."

Daylight it was—broad daylight with fast-rising temperature and a smiling sun—when the famous train roared through the salt town's environs and halted in the train-shed. A coil of black smoke whirled backward from the uncoupling engine, wreathing the blind baggage in dusky folds. Joe slipped swiftly down, masked by the bituminous cloud. He passed through activity that was seemingly heedless of his presence. Baggage hustlers, news-butchers, train and station porters, brakemen, conductors—all manner of officials evidently filled the picture, save a company detective. Him, or any one approximating him in stature, deportment or characteristics, Brooklyn Joe failed to identify in the animated throng. The hobo, drawing a quick breath of relief and already casting sidewise glances at the fresh engine that was quickly backing down to haul the flier to Albany, mutteringly walked up and down the platform, his gimlet-like eyes roving ceaselessly about in quest of his enemy.

"Maybe de boob t'inks dey ain't no bum dat's got noive 'nuff ta ride de Cenchree in daylight," he grunted.

" 'Board!" came the conductor's warning.

The train was moving when Brooklyn Joe shot suddenly forward to the end of the platform, swung over to the second blind, threw his body nimbly over the vestibule and dropped to a rung on the other side. A couple of station attendants saw the act, but they merely grinned.

The Century rushed along the beautiful Mohawk Valley. Brooklyn Joe, belted to his stanchion, was swaying contentedly back and forth above the thundering wheels. At intervals and when sweeping past cross roads or flashing by way stations, some rustic standing by to gape at the flier would suffer a spasm of amazement at the thrill-raising sight. But the little hobo was utterly heedless of the spectacular features of his daytime ride.

"Dis is real travelin'," he mumbled happily.

The train pulled through Utica and reached Albany, where Joe fell into difficulties. He espied a thin-lipped, hawk-eyed man standing vigilant on the station platform.

"Dat's de bull dat pinched me las' year," he muttered disgustedly. "If he gits dem mitts on me agen I'll git a cenchree in de can."

Joe's nerve forces mobilized for defense, and his wits began beating a tattoo on his brain, striving to solve his sudden problem. He was riding on the off-platform side of the train, and the officer had not yet discovered him. The hobo, as soon as the Century stopped, slipped to the next track paralleling her and walked swiftly forward to the engine. The engine had just been uncoupled preparatory to moving over to the roundhouse to be cleaned. Joe hopped upon the running-board and stood there until she puffed away. He descended at the switch and walked over to the fresh engine that was already backing down to haul the Century into Harmon. He swung deftly to this engine's cowcatcher as she passed, standing there apparently as unconcernedly as if he were one of the units in the system that operated her.

Then came the sudden jar of the coupling and the hiss of air. The engine stood well ahead of the platform, and Brooklyn Joe, peering cautiously around from his station on the cowcatcher, observed that his enemy was still standing on the spot where he had first seen him.

"He ain't wise, yet," muttered the hobo hopefully. "Maybe I kin make it."

"Git offa there!" shouted the fireman suddenly, brandishing a lump of coal.

His harsh tones were half-drowned by the hiss of a powerful jet of escaping steam.

" 'Board!" came just then the conductor's imperative warning, scarcely audible above the general noise.

Joe leaped from the cowcatcher, evading the aim of the incensed fireman, who no longer had time to bother about tramps. The engineer had pulled the throttle, and the Century was already moving southward. Joe leaped to the second blind as she passed. His heart was pumping rapidly to supply food to those nerve tissues depleted by the excitement of the chase. He was serenely happy.

"Now Harmon," he grinned. "An' den —N' Yawk!"

The huge steel power hurled her way along the River Division with the little tramp comfortably buckled to his stanchion as before. Oblivious alike of astounded spectators and the instant death that always lay beneath, he thrust his hands deep into his pants pockets and slept.

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At Harmon the Century discharged steam as her agent and took on electricity. As the big juice-hog backed down and hooked on, Joe was wandering up and down beside the train, looking cautiously up, down and across the acres of trackage that stretched on every side.

"Where you goin', bud?" asked a switchman suddenly.

The little hobo instinctively caught the tones of a human being in the gruffly voiced query.

"N' Yawk," he replied simply. "I caught her in Chi las' night."

"You rode the Twentieth out of Chicago?" demanded the switchman.

"Sure—been on her all night," said Brooklyn Joe.

The man stared. He looked at Joe's battered features and his blackened, cinder-reddened and sleep-craving eyes.

"I guess you got troubles of your own, buddy," he returned sympathetically. "I ain't goin' to butt in."

The switchman sauntered obligingly away. The train was moving southward, and Brooklyn Joe got on the second blind. Thus into the tunnel and through it to Forty-Second Street.

"Did you spot that 'bo?" asked the gatekeeper of a man standing by, while the long crowd of white-collared, fur-collared, serge or satin-garbed, anemic, apoplectic or rouge-countenanced beings hobbled, straggled or jostled their way through the gate from the train-shed to the concourse of the Grand Central. "Did you spot that 'bo?"

"Sure," responded the other with quizzical eyes. "And I figure that any bum that's got nerve enough to ride the Twentieth into Forty-Second Street isn't any ordinary bum, and he ought to get away with it."

But Brooklyn Joe was puzzled.

"Dat guy was sure a dick," he muttered. "I wunner w'y he lets me troo. Dey mus' be good dicks as well as punk ones."

IV

"IS DE lady of de house in?"

The portly personage framed by the doorway seemed suddenly to be gathering inflation, as a toad preparing for an unusually loud croak. The pink cheeks of the cherub-like countenance distended and waxed furiously red. The mouth opened and shut and the pink fingers clasped and unclasped in a manner suggestive of the mechanical attributes of a gigantic wax doll.

Brooklyn Joe was far from timid; nevertheless his first look at this upholstered apparition rather took him aback. Quickly the nature of his errand recurred to him, however, and he blurted out:

"I jist come in frum Chi. I wanta talk ta Missus Dur'm—de kid's mudder. It's about de kid."

The butler's face gradually lost part of its apopletic hue; and, after gazing for some seconds at the tramp in front of him, he turned about with bovine dignity and stalked to the rear.

"De kid's mudder mus' be de housekeeper," surmised the hobo. "De kid musta pulled off some trick an' had ta beat it."

While he was still speculating as to the nature of the lad's transgression and wondering how it came that even persons he met casually in the neighborhood could direct him instantly to the house, the pompous functionary returned. Still speechless with mortification, he conducted Joe frigidly into the most gorgeous apartment that the hobo had ever seen. His battered old shoes trod Ottoman rugs. He saw gaunt tapestried storks bearing cupids, and immense candelabra, and Nipponese screens and lacquer. There were divans and couches of a luxuriousness surpassing anything he had ever seen or dreamed of, not excepting some pictures he had once found in a book called "Arabian Nights."

While Brooklyn Joe, still standing popeyed with wonder and bewilderment, was attempting to solve the riddle into which he had thrust himself, a tall woman suddenly brushed aside a portière and entered. Her eyes were brown—dark brown, with outlying skin patches of red, as if she had been weeping. She pressed her hands together, came over to the hobo and stood in front of him, staring.

"De kid—" began Joe, awkwardly gulping at something in his throat.

"Dead?" she whispered, her hands still pressed together, still staring.

The hoarseness of her query gave the old hobo the creeps. He hastened to relieve her.

"Naw; he got plugged, but de hospittle guys says he's gittin' better."

The woman sank into a chair, trembling. She covered her eyes with her hands and began weeping softly. Joe stared at the

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jeweled rings on her fingers. His wondering gaze passed over the marble Sapphos and Junos and Venuses and then returned to the weeping woman.

"Don't cry, mum," he ventured soothingly. "De kid's gonna git well. Dey ain't nobody knows nuttin' 'bout de trick he pulled off out dere. De bulls copped me fur a squealer, but I didn' cough up nuttin'. I come all de way back here ta tell ya, so's nobody'd git wise. See?"

The woman suddenly ceased weeping and looked at Brooklyn Joe.

"Where is Lawrence—my boy?" she asked quietly.

"In Chi, mum. In de Moicy Hospittle."

"I fear I do not understand you."

"Chi—dat's w'at de guys calls Chicawga, mum. Dey took him ta de Moicy Hospittle."

"You mean the Mercy Hospital in Chicago? Ah! Now I understand, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Davis. Dey calls me Brooklyn Joe, mum."

For the first time Mrs. Durham seemed to take cognizance of the hobo's battered and threadbare aspect. Her eyes roved curiously over his person.

"I do not understand it all," she murmured, "but it seems I am much indebted to you, Mr. Davis. I must leave for Chicago at once to be with my boy. Do you yourself intend going back?"

"I'm headin' West," responded Brooklyn Joe. "I'm gonna ride de Cenchree back ta Chi. I got a date wit' de judge dere, day atter tamorra."

"I also shall travel on the Century," replied Mrs. Durham.

"You must allow me to make reservations for you, too. And—" she paused a moment, a sudden-born sympathy creeping into the eyes that surveyed the forlorn exterior of Brooklyn Joe—"if you would not feel offended, there are some articles of Lawrence's clothing that I believe would fit you. You and he are about of a size."

In response to her ring the butler reappeared.

"Williams, see that this—gentleman is taken care of. He will use Mr. Lawrence's room and needs a change of clothing. Call up the Grand Central and reserve a section and a berth on the Twentieth Century for Chicago. Françoise will go with me. Send Françoise up to my room."

Her lips still quivering, she rose, bowed slightly and vanished behind the portière.

The haughty domestic, grinding his teeth in rage, escorted the delighted but bewildered hobo up the broad staircase. Never before in all Joe's starved and stormy life had such a vista of wealth confronted him.

"I'm gonna ride de cushions!" was the thought that flashed like lightning through his brain.

V

THE Chicago police-court reporters had stumbled across a sensational tidbit, and they worked it into a double-column leader. Lawrence Durham, sixteen-year old son of Mrs. Leslie Durham of New York and Newport, had run away from home and fallen into the company of hoboes. Mistaken by a zealous railroad detective for a car burglar, he had been shot in the Chicago freight-yards and was slowly recovering in the Mercy Hospital.

A little old hobo, caught in the lad's company and arrested by the authorities after the shooting, had stubbornly refused to violate the boy's confidence and divulge his name. Even after having been put through the "third degree" he had persisted in his refusal to throw light upon the matter. Eventually, and as a last resort, the magistrate had deferred his hearing upon the understanding that he would personally carry the news to the boy's mother and return to trial.

The reporters played strong on the sequel. In slashing newspaper rhetoric they sketched Brooklyn Joe presenting himself before the court at the expiration of his parole. They wrote the hobo's testimony almost verbatim as the quaint and barbarous phrases fell from his lips under the sympathetic questioning of the old judge. The stubborn but loyal little derelict was bewildered by the attentions that were being suddenly thrust upon him.

At first the Court and the newspaper men had been skeptical of the hobo's story and had investigated; but his words had finally been substantiated by Mrs. Leslie Durham herself, who at that moment was at her son's bedside in the Mercy Hospital.

"But why couldn't you have given us this information before, Davis, instead of taking it upon yourself to carry a message

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a thousand miles and incur the attendant dangers and the risk of another arrest?" queried Magistrate McCardell kindly.

"Y'uronner," replied Brooklyn Joe, "de kid tells me dey's lookin' fur him in N' Yawk, so I t'inks he's pulled off a trick dere. I ain't wise dat he's on'y beat it away frum home—see?"

"And you felt yourself obligated to respect the confidence of a pal?" pursued the judge.

"I been toity years on de bum an' I've beat me way troo ev'ry State in dis Union," retorted Joe proudly, "an' I ain't never squealed on a guy yet."

His beady little eyes, still wearing their rims of black, flashed accusingly over the plain-clothes men and the uniformed officers standing by. The magistrate observed the glance.

"Why can't society keep its *men?*" he asked slowly. "This prisoner is discharged. Court is adjourned."

The reporters crowded around Brooklyn Joe, plying him with questions. They wished chiefly to learn his impressions of "de cushions," as he referrred to his westward trip from New York. They laughingly badgered out of him his first impressions of a Pullman berth and his experiences in a railroad dining-car.

"I'd sooner ride de blin' baggage!" he declared scornfully at last as a rebuke to their importunities.

A TALL man and a tall woman stood looking at each other across the cot of a wounded boy who lay in the Mercy Hospital. The man's eyes were the color of the boy's. In the depths of each was discernible a glimmer of wildness. The man's square-jawed face was tanned brown, and his hands were firm and brown—man's hands.

"Clara," he said, "this boy is my true son. He can't stand *your* life. He needs mine. He wants the hills and the rocks and the streams and the open prairie. Your life can't hold him, Clara."

The woman's bosom heaved and her eyes fell. She whimpered slightly.

"Your life almost broke me, Clara, but I've recovered myself. When I think of our home—our house, rather—with its exotics, its seductive stenches, its demoralizing upholsteries; when I recall that I could scarcely ever come into it without discovering some Vedantist, some Cubist, some canting Bohemian; when I remember that I could hardly at any time pass through our drawing-room without stumbling over some lounge lizard or some tango hound—then I feel like thanking God that I had strength enough to act the lie that gave us our freedom.

"Do you think you can bring this boy to manhood in that atmosphere of frivol and sensuality, with the bloated face of that fat snob and hypocrite that you call your butler continually spying about? For shame, Clara!"

The woman covered her face with her jeweled fingers.

"You never spoke to me like this before," she whispered.

"Even this tramp," went on the man earnestly, "with his barbarous grammar and stunted intelligence, despises your life. You can take a lesson from him. As he expresses it, you are riding 'the cushions,' Clara—you and many like you. It is the dry rot of civilization. Can't you get away from it—for the boy's sake?"

The man drew a newspaper from his pocket and spread it out in front of him.

"This is what brought me here," he murmured. "The newspaper story about this tramp."

"We are much indebted to him," replied the woman softly, while a light of new resolution leaped suddenly into her brown eyes. "We ought to find him and pay our debt."

The man stared a moment eagerly at his former wife. Then his brown and square-jawed countenance lost its hard expression and he looked happily down into his son's eyes.

They instituted search for Brooklyn Joe, which was destined to prove fruitless. At that moment the little hobo was belted to the blind baggage of a flier that was rolling him swiftly into the West.

"Dem bulls ain't sich bad guys atter all," he was muttering. "Dey gives me de t'oid degree an' a fierce beatin', but dey squares deirselves atterward. Dem eats was sure de goods, atter de li'l' samples w'at dey shoves acrost ta ya in dat —— fool dinin'-car!"

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The YELLOW STREAK

by GEORGES SURDEZ

"UNBELIEVABLE that a man should change so much in two days!"

Langford, the steamship company's agent, indicated with a glance the stranger sitting apart from the others at the far end of the wide veranda.

West Africa, Grand Bassam, evening—what else was there to do but gather at the club and play cards and drink and talk?

Cigar and cigaret smoke formed a haze around the electric lights that shone weakly from wires strung overhead. The smell of palm oil was in the air from the casks that lay in long rows in the compounds of the factories, awaiting shipment. The cement walk still sent up heat, stored from the bright tropical sun. Fireflies in the sand lot, a space dignified by the name of "garden," flickered in swarms. The pounding of the surf on the beach, the singing of palm leaves in the night breeze held mysterious meaning, a whispered allusion to uncanny things. It was late, and the men around the table, inspired by numerous drinks, were waxing philosophical.

Charolat, the bulky French timber-buyer, nodded to Langford in assent.

"Yes, that man he get old twenty years in forty hours!"

True. The William Grayson who had landed two days before, a tall, strong gray-haired man of fifty, now slumped in his chair, useless cigar hanging from listless fingers—a smashed, broken, old man. His hair was white, his face seamed and haggard. The once well-fitting Palm Beach suit now hung on him as drapings on a scarecrow. He had been sitting there all the evening in the club, alone. Attempts to draw him into conversation had failed. From time to time he knitted his brows as if to gather his thought. He repeatedly passed his hand over his forehead.

The group at the table were at a loss. What could one do with a man who did not complain, did not seek sympathy, evidently wanted to be left alone?

"Better keep quiet," Kessler hinted to Charolat. "He might hear."

"Oh, no," Langford assured him. "A cannon going off wouldn't disturb him."

Nevertheless the conversation swung to the latest gossip. Charolat gave full details. His man had heard the news at the ice-house, where the servants gathered at four in the afternoon to get the wherewithall to cool the evening drinks. The fat Frenchman's narrative was interrupted by many laughs. Langford followed with reminiscences from his checkered career as sea-captain, soldier of fortune, steamship agent. The evening did not give promise to be other than usual.

Presently a step was heard on the veranda. Kessler peered into the darkness.

"It's Darby," he informed the others shortly.

Langford continued with his story. The newcomer stepped under the entrance light.

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"Oh, God!"

The exclamation cracked like a rifle-shot. Every one turned. Grayson had jumped to his feet, deathly pale. For a moment it seemed as if he were about to speak to Darby. But with a quick, brusk movement he hurried past and down the steps into the street.

Darby joined the others with a grin that was not pleasant to see. Darby had no lips. At some time his face had been burned to a crisp. Attempts to graft new skin had resulted only in marking the raw red flesh with white spots of the stitches. The dark patch where the nose had been was pulsating, moving under the dim light. An artificial eye stared straight ahead vacantly. The other looked out from beneath wrinkled reddish lids from which every hair had been burned. The head was bald. He had only one arm, the right sleeve being pinned back to the shoulder.

"Guess my face scared him!" he laughed.

His voice was sonorous and warm, his laughter contagious. The others joined.

"You're bragging!" Kessler derided. "He's only nervous. Didn't you hear?"

"No." Darby pulled a chair up to the table and nodded for the servant to bring him a drink. "I just got in from down the Coast twenty minutes ago, shaved and came over to hear the latest news."

Langford sat up. Here was a good story and a fresh listener.

"I'll tell you all about it," he said quickly, not wanting Charolat or Kessler to usurp his rôle. "About a month ago young Grayson arrived here. You've heard of him?"

"I was up-bush getting palm oil," Darby answered.

"A nice young man," Langford resumed. "Tall, blond, well-built. He came down for the Grayson Steamship Company of New Orleans. They wanted to start a line to the West Coast of Africa. I don't see how they could compete with us but, in any case, the young fellow came down. Perhaps you've heard, he had one failing—he couldn't stand drink.

"The very first evening he cut loose and tried to batter up little Perkins of Kingsley Company. But young Grayson had a good business head and soon arranged with the Société Centrale to represent him. He was supposed to go on to the Gold Coast and Nigeria with the same scheme. But he wanted to do some big game hunting and he got me to promise to take him into the Sudan for a few days shooting. Then he heard that his father was coming out to see things for himself and he decided to wait for him here.

"I invited him to stay at my place—you see, outside of business hours we weren't, competitors—thinking that he'd enjoy the home atmosphere. My wife liked him, wanted to mother him. He seemed to resent this and, just to show that he could drink if he wanted to, every night found him in Bartoud's across the way, swilling with the younger chaps. He had a following among them, for he loaned money and was a steady loser at cards. When my wife remonstrated he moved out of the house and went to live in that bungalow over there."

Every one turned mechanically and looked at the darker patch in the night, fifty feet distant. As they looked a light appeared in one of the windows.

"That was his bed-room, where the light is," Kessler put in.

"The father cabled that he was delayed, and Grayson had nothing to do but drink," Langford continued. "It showed rapidly. Anything wrong with your body in this climate and you don't last long. We all hoped his father would arrive soon before the sun got him, or the fever. Then the boy had his first bout with the D. T's. It shook him considerably, but three days later he was in the café again, drinking more than ever.

"Last Saturday night, just three days ago, he stayed there until it closed, then took some of the boys to his bungalow and drank more. The party broke up at four Sunday morning, and the others left Jimmy Grayson asleep in bed. In the morning the *Afrique* arrived from Bordeaux. Old man Grayson was on board. I was relieved when I met him at the wharf looking for his son. He would put a stop to the booze-fighting; the father was the one influence over that chap. I had seen one of his letters. Almost motherly it was, and yet the boy was always worrying for fear the governor would learn and give him a lecture.

"When Jimmy referred to his father he was a different chap. One could see that the relationship was very close. And Grayson was trembling with joy at the thought of seeing his son again. He eagerly asked about him, his way of living, the work he

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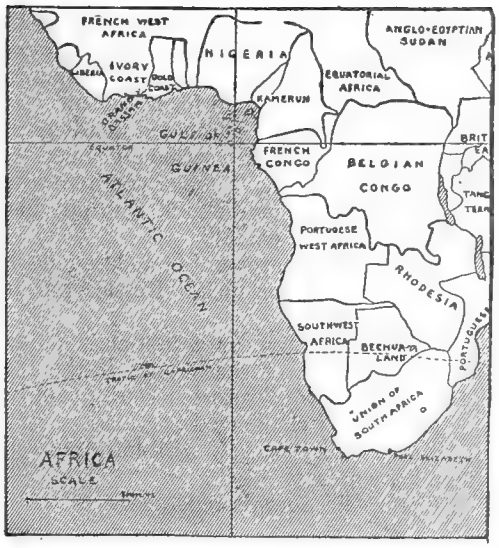
had done, what I thought of him. Not obviously, of course, but one could see. We came to the bungalow over there and I thought best to let him meet his son alone. I waited on the veranda.



"I heard no voices for a few minutes and I was about to investigate when Grayson came out. He looked at me, grinning foolishly. I thought he was crazy. I suppose he was.

" 'I can't understand,' he said.

"He went to the veranda railing, put his forehead to a post and stayed there. I was amazed. I couldn't understand either. Perhaps the old man had noticed Jimmy was drunk or had smelled the booze about the place or seen the cards and chips. I waited for him to explain until I couldn't stand it any longer.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"He waved his hand toward the door without turning even to look at me. I went into the boy's room.

"Jimmy's body was stretched on the floor. He was dead, with a razor in his hand, and the place all messed up with blood, the sheets, the floor. I admit it without shame; I started crying. Why hadn't Grayson arrived a day earlier? Why? Fate, I guess. I went out and tried to talk to Grayson; but he could only stare at me and repeat—

" 'I don't understand.'

"He didn't break down until we had placed the body on the bed and arranged for its shipment back to the States. Then when he sobbed it was as if a noose were being drawn tight around his heart. And through it all he kept muttering:

" 'I don't understand. I can't——' "

"He is leaving in two or three days," Kessler murmured. "As soon as he can get a boat."

"I wonder what explanation he'll give the boy's mother. He sent him here and I understand he had traveled in these parts years ago. He knew the boy couldn't stand drink, or should have known. Guess the man's through. He doesn't appear to have any life left in him. Tonight he wouldn't talk and I guess he can't drink, because he thinks that his son was killed by the thing."

Langford held up his glass. The light shone through the amber fluid.

"Best stuff in the world if used right!"

Charolat, who had a gruesome sense of humor, added—

"But causes trouble when it makes a man mistake his throat for a razor strap!"

NO ONE laughed, and the Frenchman sank back into the silence, abashed. Darby smoked in regular puffs, his one eye blinking. The skin over his temples pulsated visibly under the light. Because of his disfigurement it was impossible to read his thoughts.

"Yes, guess Grayson's through," said Kessler, to break the silence.

"It's life," Charolat ponderously pointed out.

"It's unfair," declared Servais, who was an atheist and posed as a philosopher. As Administrator of Native Affairs, a government employee, his long years of close study of native life had given him an insight on human reactions.

"How's that?" questioned Kessler in his positive American manner.

"Take this suicide business—" began Servais.

"Horrible word!" Charolat remarked. "Why not say, 'accident caused by excessive drinking'?"

"Call it whatever you wish, I say it's unfair."

"Why?" Darby asked quietly.

He smiled an awful weird smile that showed his tobacco-blackened teeth.

"What has Grayson done to deserve this!" Servais was excited in his indignation. "His wife, though she won't tell him so,

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will always think he was to blame. I heard she was opposed to sending the boy down, but the father insisted. Thought it would be good for him. And now what has he? Work is only pleasure when it means happiness for some one. Why should he own ships? Why get money by the bucketful? What good would it do any one?"

"He could give it to charity," said Kessler.

"All the altruism in the world can't make charity the aim of a man's life, charity to others, not of his blood. Satisfaction it might give, not happiness. And always he'll think, 'If I'd kept Jimmy home!' If—if—that torturing word that hurts so, even in trivial things."

"Yes," grunted Charolat. "My wife used to say she would have been happy if——"

"Can't you ever be serious?" Servais asked in disgust.

"Humor is the only thing to keep one alive," Charolat explained. "And I have to take things lightly. You see, she died last week. I just received the cable."

Servais grasped his arm in mute apology. Nothing was said for a few minutes, and in that pause Charolat received his sympathy and understanding.

"And so we come to the conclusion that there is no such a thing as justice in the scheme of things," Kessler began. "That right and wrong are not weighed in the balance, but fall at random. Justice is not blind because it does not exist. Things are merely chaotic and the fellow who is without luck gets walloped. Let's hope there is an after-life where things are better arranged, where the good will be rewarded and the skunk will get his."

"Theology's a little too involved to discuss tonight," Langford said. "And I can't agree with you, Kessler. We're none of us saints."

No one spoke for a while. Langford yawned and looked at his watch. Almost time to go back to the bungalow and try to sleep.

"I believe in the justice of Fate."

Darby had just spoken.

The others regarded him curiously. He was not given to long drawn-out discussion, and they were surprized that he should lock horns with Servais, who loved to argue about anything, from love to the price of cattle on the hoof in Argentina.

"Explain, explain!" demanded Servais, settling back in his chair, his face set, ready to prove his point or die in the attempt.

Langford sighed. He wanted to go to bed, but he enjoyed a discussion. Curiosity finally won, and he ordered another drink and lit his fifth cigar.

"Fate doesn't strike at random. Punishment is handed out to the fellow who deserves it. Retribution overtakes the skunk. Everything must be paid for in the end just as happiness must be purchased in advance. Without embarking on a sermon it can easily be proved. There isn't one of you here who doesn't know of some skunk who got his, right on this little earth!"

"Not to mention several first-class fellows who played in poor luck," Kessler put in cynically.

"A man may appear a first-class fellow and still be one of the skunks if the full truth were known," retorted Darby calmly.

"Pessimist," challenged Servais.

"Not at all. Merely well-informed. I have known cases——"

"Example!" Servais repeated.

DARBY hesitated. The lamps went out. It must be one o'clock. The electrician in the tiny power house always turned the lights off then. The group sat in the semi-darkness, the cigarets and cigars glowing fitfully. The boy brought a lantern and placed it on the table in front of Darby. Under its light his glass eye shone like a basilisk. Charolat moved uneasily. The conversation was getting too serious.

"Go on; example!" Servais insisted.

"I'm now trading in palm oil, as you know," Darby began. "But some of you may remember that I have been a mining engineer."

"Yes, I remember," Langford assented.

"My face, strange as it may seem to you, was not always what it is. I was once rather handsome. I get sentimental over it, just as an actress who has had her fling. When I was twenty-four just before this happened to me—yes, I was rather good looking. Pray, pardon my boasting. Still, I should permit myself, seeing that I now look like a parboiled tomato left too long in the pantry."

Langford was glad he had stayed. He had often wondered how Darby had been mangled. While willing to joke about his infirmity, Darby did not enjoy joking from

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others. He never spoke of the cause, and naturally no one asked him. This very reticence promised an interesting story if—Darby was going to talk about himself.

"Naturally I was quite a ladies' man," Darby continued. "Until I met the one girl. You know how that hits you?"

They nodded. They knew. Some had been lucky. Some not; mostly not.

"I had two good eyes to look at her then. And she liked my eyes. She told me that after we had been friends for a week. Hers were brown, dark brown with tiny flecks of gold in them when the sun shone. It didn't take me long to propose, and I was accepted. You can imagine, can't you, the great moment? Being accepted by the only girl when you're twenty-four and are the proud possessor of a good-looking set of features. I had curly hair too. It was burned with the rest and never came back. I miss it at times——"

Darby passed his hand over his wrinkled scalp before he went on:

"Her father had a position in life. He was a judge. And I had no money, naturally. In my interview with papa he declared that a judge who had a real standing in the community couldn't let his daughter marry a good-looking fellow without money. Things are reversed now. I have money but no good looks, eh."

No one answered.

"I asked him what he considered a safe foundation for a happy married life. He wasn't happy with his wife, so he felt that he could give me advice. The figure rather staggered me. I beat him down to one-tenth of the sum with the help of the only girl, who called tears to her big, gold-flecked eyes and sapped his resistance. She was great at tears, held them on tap, I believe. She had plenty of chances to use that particular talent later on and has still more coming to her. Forgive me if I talk bitterly of the only girl, but I didn't get her in the end. With enthusiasm I went after the cash. The Tubal Cain Silver Company had a fine opportunity for young engineers in Chili. The climate wasn't ideal, the life lonely, but it paid fairly well. I took the position, kissed the only girl good-by—I had lips then—and sailed—to be gone two years.

"I found the manager of the mine to be a crabbed old man—old, the age I am now, and a drunkard. He had another engineer, a very nice fellow. We roomed together, had our meals together, lived like brothers. He had charge of one shaft, I of another. The manager slept most of the time and never gave orders—that is, with any sense to them. And he would forget those he gave, so the thing was up to us. We worked like dogs and drove the natives as hard as ourselves. And we got results, too, but the manager took the credit.

"Sundays we rested and smoked and talked. Though my room-mate had not yet found the only girl I would tell him of my plans, and he would offer suggestions. It was only after I had been with him a year that I found he had a yellow streak. He bullied the men under him. Once, when there was trouble, he wouldn't come out and face the mob. I knew the *hombres* were mostly wind and with a few promises and a fair amount of drink I got them back into good humor.

"When I came into the house again I found him shaking like a leaf, a six-shooter in his hand. He laughed and said he had been about to come out but couldn't trust his temper, was afraid he'd injure some one. I believed him, that time. After that he tried to get in with the manager; perhaps because he feared bad reports in the home office, perhaps because he hated me for having seen him in a moment of cowardice.

"Being so thick with the old sot led him to drinking. For months at a stretch I was the only sober one in camp when night fell. The young fellow, mildly jagged, was too friendly with the men and too harsh with them when sober. At his shaft things began to go wrong. His production fell, and there were accidents, needless accidents from his carelessness.

"We received a shipment of giant powder one Saturday night, and he was supposed to handle it, put it in the magazine. He left it in a little shack near the railway station and went over to the manager's for his usual week-end souse. I sat in the house, writing, I believe. As life grew lonely for me I took it out in letters. I wrote more rot in that time than forty love-crazed fools in a year! My foreman, a greaser of more than ordinary savvy, came to me and told me about the dynamite. I didn't wish to infringe upon the other fellow's work, so I got up and went to the main house to warn him. The workmen had started a *fiesta* of some kind and had fires burning along the

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tracks. My foreman had tried to stop them, but they were gloriously happy and dynamite meant nothing to them.

"I reached the old man's place and found the young engineer and he passably gay. They laughed at my worry and told me to sit down and have a drink. I was pretty lonely, it must be admitted, and accepted thankfully. But I had a premonition that the darn stuff in the shack would cause trouble before morning. And it did. A man rushed in with the announcement that the shack had taken fire. There was enough explosive there to ruin the whole camp.

"I looked to the manager for orders, but he told the other fellow to get his men and remove the stuff before the fire reached it. He went as white as a sheet and started that —— trembling. He fairly rattled. I offered to go out, but with the obstinacy of a mule the old man insisted that I should keep out of it.

"My brother engineer went out and signaled for me to follow, which I did and, by Jove, he begged me to handle the stuff myself, said he didn't feel right, his dinner had disagreed with him and he had had fever all day! I was disgusted. But I ran to the station.

"The shack was blazing. Only Pete, my foreman was there, and he hovered about in fear of his skin. There was no time to fight the fire. I told Pete to stand outside and I'd pass him the cases. He stuck by like a white man. I broke the door down with a kick. There were four boxes in the corner. I picked them up. I started handing them out to Pete who ran with them to the watering-trough. As I threw him the last one the roof fell and I was buried in the blazing timber. I felt the fire on my face then things went black. I found out afterward that Pete had pulled me out, burning himself pretty badly in doing so. My whole face was gone, and my arm was crushed.

"We had no doctor, and the manager, who had some notions of medicine and a surgeon's kit of which he was rather proud, took care of me. It's by the grace of Heaven that he left me anything. He hacked my arm off and experimented with my face. I was three months getting on my feet. The other chap had disappeared, bound for the Coast."

"The first time I saw myself in the mirror I nearly fainted. Age has had no effect on me. My face was as you see it now. I knew she would offer to marry me, but I must decline energetically. At the bottom of my heart I hoped her love would survive. I could wear a mask. Those things were done.

"I was almost insane when I landed in San Francisco and called her on the telephone. At the sound of her voice my resolutions to sacrifice myself began to slip. I identified myself. I wanted to tell her of my disfigurement, warn her, but there was no need.

" 'I have heard of the way you behaved down there, and I know how that thing happened. You only received what you deserved.'

"I was dumfounded. I inquired, calmly enough, as to the source of her information. It was simple. To cover himself the manager had not reported the fire. His carelessness would have cost him his position. My once friend had gone straight to the girl to warn her against me, attributing the cowardice to me and saying that I had been thrown into the fire at a native *fiesta* while I was drunk and interfering with the miners' woman folk. Cleverly worked, and as the firm had confirmed my drunkenness from the reports sent in by the old man I had no leg to stand on.

"Furthermore she announced she was engaged to be married to another man. I laughed loudly as I hung up. My soul was as mangled as my face. And when I found out that *he* was the man the thought came to me that I should go over with a gun and do a little shooting. Then deep within me something whispered, 'He'll pay—he'll pay.' It continued to repeat, continued to hold me back and——"

Darby paused and sipped at his drink.

"I went out into the world."

Charolat grunted excitedly. The others waited in breathless silence.

"How does that prove your theory of retribution?" finally asked Servais as Darby continued to remain quiet.

"The man and the girl married. He made good financially. I heard of them once in a while through the newspapers. I only smiled and the voice again said, 'Wait—he'll pay.' "

He relighted his cigar.

"They had a son, a fine boy. I followed his career through school, college, busi-

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ness—and then—" Darby smiled again, horribly.

"His father was foolish enough to let him come to the West Coast of Africa. He knew the boy couldn't stand drink, or he should have known."

A swift intake of breath and the listeners bent forward.

"Fate was kind enough to put me in at the finish. That was more than coincidence. It was justice! Justice blind? No, no, no! I knew it would be so. And so Grayson 'couldn't understand, didn't understand.' He did when he saw my face under the light. He does now up there in his boy's room with the blood stains on the floor——"

Servais was the only one who could find speech—

"How does that prove that justice exists?"

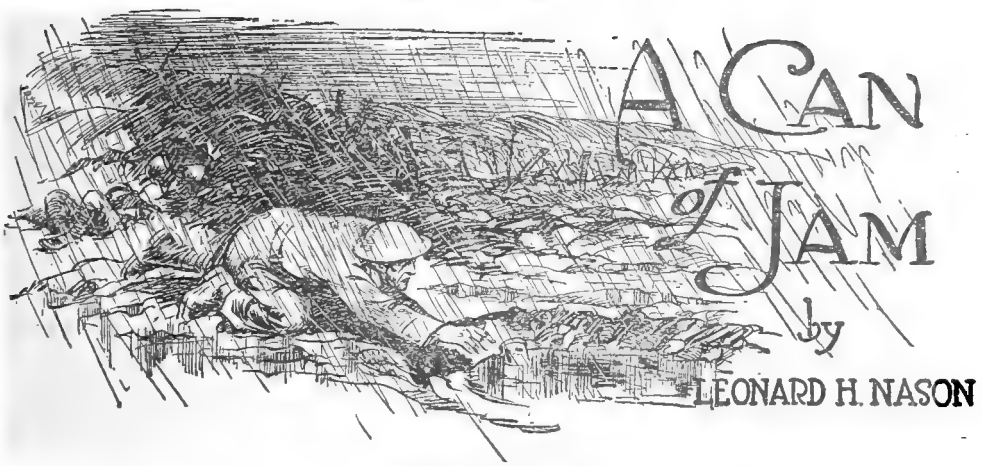
"How come?" inquired Kessler.

"What," retorted Servais, "what had Darby done to be tortured for life. And Jimmy Grayson, what about him?"

Darby pushed his chair back and got up, his disfigurement as always a mask for his thoughts. Without another word he moved away, down the veranda steps and off into the darkness. A few minutes later another light shone in another bungalow farther down the street.

"I wonder—" Servais muttered.

And no one could answer.



Author of "The Patrol."

COLD, driving rain. Lines of wet, shivering horses, two or three wagons standing forlornly in the middle of a field. Indeed a cheerful scene. This was a regiment of field artillery in reserve. Each battery was by itself, its guns shrouded in tarpaulins, two or three pup-tents scattered about, a chow-gun giving off little spurts of steam where the rain struck it. Where are the gunners? In holes in the ground, in ditches, under the guns and wagons, anywhere that a slicker or a shelter-half can be stretched to protect them from the rain.

In an old shell-hole, huddled together for warmth, were four men of "A" battery. Truly, these men were above the common herd, for they had a tarpaulin to cover the hole. This meant that they were clever thieves, for tarps were worth their weight in diamonds and were not issued for the comfort of enlisted men. One was a machine-gun sergeant, one a liaison corporal, and the other two were telephone-men. Said the sergeant, after an attempt to light a cigaret with a wet match:

"A bitter, deadly curse on the day that ever I enlisted in a combat branch. Would that my hand had rotted at the wrist, before I ever held it up and said, 'I do.' Dry the throat and withered the tongue that ever spoke to me of Fame's eternal camping-ground, and glory and honor, and hurrah, boys, on to Berlin. It is now a week since this drive started and we have advanced almost two kilometers. It has been said to me that Jerry is a coward. I wish I had the man that said it here."

"He took wings to himself at St. Mihiel, so he did," said a telephone-man.

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"Many a good man has pulled out under a bombardment, and I would like to see the man in all the armies who has not run a few yards in his time," replied the sergeant.

"No less a one than myself," said the liaison corporal, "for when I was with the French on the Chemin des Dames, and the Dutch came through, I went forth from a shower-bath and rode my motorcycle twenty-seven kilometers, as naked as when I came into the world."

Now this was a fact, and was well-known to the regiment; wherefore this man was called a name that I dare not write.

"How come you stopped then?" asked one of the four.

"I ran out of gas," was the reply.

"Back there," said one of the telephone-men, indicating the south of France generally, "are truck-drivers, engineers, hospital corps, aviators, clerks, M. P.'s, this, that and the other thing, dry and warm, living the life of the well-known Reilly. Three squares and a dry flop every night, and threats of murder against the cook, in that there has been no pie for supper for three nights in a row. Such as they will go home some day and remark that it was a terrible war, and marry our girls, and take up our jobs, the while we stay here with a cross made of ration boxes at our head."

"And did we not," said another, "play duck on the rock in the rain this morning, it being so decreed by 'Dizzy'?"

"Ah, that unmentionable son of misery," muttered his listeners.

Four days the regiment to which these men belonged had waited patiently at the foot of this little hill, coming out of their holes to watch an air-fight, or to see a balloon shot down, or to climb up the hill and watch the ambulances and trucks going up to the front. Far off across the Meuse could be seen guns, winking and winking, and to the north, giant firecrackers going off in the air with a double bang. This was Jerry combing the woods with shrapnel, and making things lively for the steenth division, that had been in those same woods since daylight, and wished it were in hell instead, as being a much more pleasant place. Regularly every day would come the order to harness up to move forward, and just as regularly would come its revocation—

"Unharness and back into the ground again."

"I crave some jam," said the sergeant. "After that dinner today, I yearn for bread and jam, lots of jam, and thick slices of bread."

And he watered at the mouth.

"'Kickapoo,'" said he to one of the telephone-men, so called because he had sold "Kickapoo Indian Remedy for Man or Beast" before the War, "since last pay-day, you have lost to me, shooting jaw-bone crap, the sum of two hundred and forty-four francs. If you will go forth into the rain and procure me some jam, I will call it square."

"And I," said the machine-gun sergeant, "will give you the next Luger that I find for a like consideration."

"It was in my mind that I would like a bit of jam myself," said the medicine-seller, "and I will see what I can do. Anything is better than lying in this hole, with the water running down the back of my neck, and this gomeral kicking me in the shins at every move. I hope I find some Frog that wants to swap some vin rooge for cigarets. However, I do not care to go alone. It is too wet and the town is quite far for all it seems near, and it is always well to do these things by twos."

The other men sighed and allowed that they would do without jam. The rain pattered on the tarp, and who wanted to be wet when it was not necessary?

"Go and get 'Shorty,'" said the corporal, "and tell him you know where he can buy some cheese."

"I never thought of that," said Kickapoo, and at once he crawled out into the wet, and dragged his slicker after him.

Just back of the picket-line was a small two-horse wagon called a *fourgon*. It had a canvas top and curtains like a prairie-schooner, a high tailboard, and steps going up into it, that could be raised at will. On the march this wagon carried the portable forge, horseshoes, reserve rations, officers' baggage, the grain for the battery horses, the fire-control instruments, the picket-line, spare saddles, spare harness, the two machine-guns, extra clothing for the firing battery, extra gas masks and extra blankets.

Two or three spare tarpaulins were lashed over the top and several pots and pans slung from the axle. At night this wagon would bristle with pistols and packs hung thereon by every man who was near enough to seize them off upon the approach of an officer. In camp it served as retreat for a

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sergeant, who rejoiced in the name of Shorty, and would go anywhere at any time upon being told that there was cheese to be bought.

Unto this wagon now came Kickapoo. The tailboard of the wagon was raised and the steps lifted. Shorty was within and had raised his drawbridge and lowered the portcullis, like any feudal lord. Kickapoo drew off somewhat as one making a reconnaissance and then threw rocks at the side of the *fourgon* from a safe distance. There was a scuffling sound, and Shorty's face appeared at the canvas curtains, like a sleepy owl.

"What is all this?" cried he, with peeve.

"Come out of that," said the gunner, "and go down into the town with me."

"Get gone," said Shorty, with profane words, "for it is raining soup and stones to splash it, and I would fain sleep."

His face disappeared, and sounds were heard that meant he had flung himself on the floor and pulled the blankets over his head. The gunner drew near to the *fourgon* and whispered through a crack—

"There is a Frog canteen there, and one can buy cheese thereat with bugs on it."

Bang! The tailboard went down, the steps dropped with a rattle, and Shorty leaped forth, fully equipped in slicker and tin hat.

"Out of my way," cried he, and set off across the field at a run.

"Hey," cried the gunner, "not that way; the old man would break a gut if he knew we left camp, and well you know it."

"Well then, how?"

"Along the narrow gage, and when it goes out of sight behind the church, then we will be out of sight likewise, and well rid of this cursed camp. I have spent now four nights in an old shell-hole with Baldy and Ham and another accursed machine-gunner, and I have no craving to lie in it all day. Moreover, and beyond, I have lost my bones, and we have no matches anyway, and you are the only one in the outfit with any money. If we keep moving, we will not mind the rain so much."

ACCORDINGLY they set off down the track and dived through the ruined church, past a cemetery full of French graves with dates back to 1915, and then down through what were once gardens, and pleasant lawns, but now showed only torn and mangled earth, with broken bayonets, and rusty machine-gun clips, instead of flowers.

There was quite a lot of the town still standing. Corps headquarters had just moved in and was occupying the cellars, dripping orderlies were unloading great bedding-rolls, and setting up cots, while natty officers, for all the rain, were stalking about, as if the fate of the Army rested on them. One of these, with a face that appeared to be carved out of rock, had two stars on his overseas cap.

"It is the old he-one himself," said Shorty.

And he and Kickapoo sneaked behind a wall, lest that stern eye should light on them and inquire their business.

The two stopped at a rolling kitchen that was drawn up under a shed, dispensing bread and coffee to all and sundry, to walking wounded, casuals trying to find their outfits, M. P.'s on their way to or from the pens, traffic directors, telephone-linesmen, and all the flotsam and jetsam of that great flood that rolled ever toward the north. No jam.

"What the ——!" said the mess sergeant. "Ain't plain bread good enough for you? You're at the front, now, you know. No more pink shoes."

Now this was not fair, for both Shorty and Kickapoo had been on the Marne and at St. Mihiel, and the mess sergeant had probably never been nearer the front than he then was. Up the road near a huge sign that said, "Play the game, boys, obey the M. P.," was a Ford drawn up in the ditch, beside which was a straggling line of men.

"'Y' man or Red Cross," said Kickapoo.

"Hey," said Shorty, "got any cheese?"

There was no reply to this, except a muttered: "Git in line, guy. You ain't no better than anybody else," from divers of the standees.

"Fry your foot," said Kickapoo, "we ain't gettin' in your way. All we want to know is if this guy has got any cheese or jam to sell."

The argument waxing warm and acquiring adjectives, brought interruption from within the Ford. A spectacled face pushed through the curtains.

"I haven't any jam, or cheese either. Don't you men know that there is a war on?"

"Aw, how the —— do you know there

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is?" said Shorty. "You never saw none of it."

A gust of laughter shook the waiting line at this, and the two searchers went off with lighter hearts. Neither one noticed that the rain had stopped, for they were so wet that the actual stopping of the rain gave them no different sensation. It was only when the sun came out that they noted it was low on the horizon, and bethought them of camp.

"Where is that canteen you said I could get cheese at?" demanded Shorty.

"Well, it was here yesterday," said the other. "Maybe they moved it back."

"Ah, you unregenerate dumb-bell, wait till I get you on detail again. You have brought me here on a wild-goose chase, and there is no more cheese in this town than there are teeth in a hen. I am going back to camp, for it is time for chow."

Accordingly they set off, Kickapoo protesting his innocence, and although they stopped at two more kitchens, they found neither cheese nor jam. By the time they got back to the battery, it was time for chow, and the line was already forming near the kitchen. As Kickapoo came in, his companions of the shell-hole approached eagerly and cursed horridly when they found that they were without luck.

"The top kick is looking for you," said the machine-gunner, "and I hope he details you for a stretcher-bearer with the infantry or something good like that."

So then the battery had supper.

"I wonder," said one of the gunners, pounding his French biscuit with his pistol butt, and then putting the bits into the coffee to soak, "who gets all the sugar they tell us the folks at home are denying themselves to give us?"

At this there was great nodding of heads and wise smiles.

"How many fingers gets into a bag of sugar between here and Bordeaux?" cried one.

"Were you ever back in the S. O. S.? Them guys lives like kings, and our own ammunition train takes what's left, and that is why," said another listener, who wore a wound stripe, "that we are now eating meat cut from between the horns, and just above the hoof. By the time a side of beef has got by the quartermaster corps and the railway engineers and the gang at the ration dump, and the ammunition train, and finally gets to the firing battery, the mess sergeant and the cooks and the officers take what is left, and the soldier gets the hinder end, which is all he ever did and ever will, and is to be expected."

"When I was at Gièvres," quoth one, "upon a Sunday we had roast chicken and strawberry ice cream."

He fled, amid a storm of helmets and empty mess-kits. So then they fell to and let their victuals stop their mouths, albeit it was poor stoppage. The coffee would take the skin off the back of a man's hand. No milk, no sugar. These men had hoarded sugar for weeks while they were in rest camp, that they might have some to start the drive with, and when they had gone up to the front, the wagon with their precious load of sugar, enough to give each man a heaping spoonful, had broken down and been abandoned. No need to wash those mess-kits. They were licked and polished as clean as ever soap and water made them. And there were no seconds.

"Oh, ——," said Kickapoo, "to have a full stomach for once."

The first sergeant bore down on him with malice in his eye.

"How come you beat it out of camp this afternoon, and me huntin' for you in the rain? Report to the supply officer at seven o'clock, the ration dump for yours, and help draw clothes for the outfit. Take along a grain sack. I hope they fill it full of bricks for you."

Then he went his way, for he was a majestic man and one mindful of his position.

Behold our friend Kickapoo, perched on an escort wagon and bumping over the road with six or seven other unfortunates. It was dark before they set out, although there was enough moon to make the darkness seem blacker. It would be a good night for air stuff, thought the vendor of remedies for man or beast, and he was glad that he was far enough back to be fairly safe. There was not much traffic on the roads as yet, only an occasional ambulance, its driver whistling shrilly.

No horns did these drivers use, for horns were gas signals, so they blew on whistles, and if one heeded not, one was run over. These whistles were the same as those used by non-coms, and new troops, up for the first time, frequently wore themselves to a fringe by falling in every time an ambulance went by. Later in the night, these

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roads would be choked with troops, on foot and in trucks, great guns being dragged along by tractors, field artillery, cavalry, *fourgons*, slat wagons, rolling kitchens, chow carts, cursing drivers, shouting officers, motorcyclists, staff limousines, everything connected with the advance of the Army. At times Fritz shelled one of these roads, when traffic was at its height. This last is not to be described.

It was some eight or nine kilometers to the dump, and the night was growing cold!

They were stopped once by a member of the military police.

"Where are you guys going to?" he called up to the driver.

"To ——, want to come?"

"Now never mind getting hard boiled," replied the upholder of the law. "I only asked a simple question."

"We are going to the ration dump at Blercourt," said the supply officer, from the back of the wagon.

"Who won the War?" cried Kickapoo, in a high tenor.

"Come off that wagon," cried the M. P. in a rage, "and I will knock you for a three weeks' furlough."

"Now never mind getting hard boiled," said Kickapoo, "I only asked a simple question.

At last, after many halts, and turnings down the wrong road, they arrived. Kickapoo was so stiff with cold that he could barely stand, and the officer in charge was very brusk, and no one seemed to know what to do. They went here and there and waited patiently, and Kickapoo, having had his sack filled with stockings, began to wander back to the wagon.

His mind had been a blank since supper, but now it began to function. Jam was an article of issue, although a rare one. It would not be strange if there were some in the dump. It would be worth a few looks at least.

The dump was a shadowy place, and men were running hither and yon with no apparent purpose, bearing boxes and bags, or yelling to unseen people to come and lend a hand. Kickapoo was frequently banged with the sharp corner of a box, or running headlong into a supply wagon. There were tons and tons of canned willie, but nothing that looked like jam—when there it was, and in an open box. Kickapoo was on his knees at once. Cans with paper round them, slim, tall cans, too thin by far for hash, and much too large for condensed milk. He peered at them, but could not read the label. What kind had a white label? Grapelade! Grapelade for a surety, and the poor man smacked his lips! Two cans in his overcoat pockets and two in his shirt.

A plane went buzzing by. *Crash!* The heavens had fallen. The gunner was shaken as by a mighty hand! Was that a shell? *Crash!* Cries, the thunder of galloping hoofs, falling débris, rattling stones pattering around like rain. The slow buzzing of a million flies. An air raid! The dump was being bombed! The gunner stood up and seemed to leave his other self upon the ground. Something flowed out of him, like water from a sieve. It was his courage, and he was left weak and trembling. He essayed to run. What use? He might run under a bomb. Ninety feet down they went, those bombs, and dug one up, and mangled one, and tossed one all about, so that there was not so much as a spot of blood left, let alone an identification tag.

A dazzling light and everything was as bright as day. One of the planes had fired a light. The gunner threw himself on the ground as at the sound of a shell. Get up! Get up and run! He tore down an alley between piles of boxes, and fell over a dead horse, his foot caught in its protruding entrails. He shrieked at the horror of it. Just ahead of him in a corner were four men, holding something over their heads, and cowering together like sheep. The gunner flung himself under the shelter, hurling himself bodily at these men, crowding them with all his strength.

Two more men came in, panting and sobbing. One had been hit and was bleeding terribly. One looked out, and ducked in hurriedly, as a dark shape floated by overhead. The bombs continued to fall. Machine-guns were pounding somewhere, and a ruddy light was beginning to throw objects into relief. The dump was on fire. With a suddenness that stopped the breath, all was still. Low moans, and cries of, "First Aid! First Aid!" The machine-gun fire died. The raid was over. The gunner crawled out and looked at what had sheltered him and his companions. It was an O. D. blanket, and these men had held it over their heads as if it were a sheet of impenetrable steel.

"Do you birds know that one of them

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bombs would go down into a cement dugout, and dig you up?" said he.

"Well," replied one, "it felt good, anyway."

Howbeit, this was no place to stand on the order of going, for the dump was likely to blow up at any minute. Accordingly they took wings, every man to his own place, and none ran so fast as did the gunner, who dashed off across the fields, falling down and getting up, scrambling out of one shell-hole to fall into another up to his waist in water, and all the time waiting to hear the thunderous roar that meant the explosion of the dump. Some time later he learned that there were no munitions there —the dump was one for rations only.

The longest way round is the shortest way home. The mud was ankle deep, and there was old wire lying about that caught in his clothes and held him back, so that he yearned for the shell-hole and his three companions with a mighty longing. Water ran down his face, but whether tears or rain, he could not say. He dropped the two cans out of his shirt and dabbled in a puddle for some time before he found them again. When he at last found the road, and set out for the long hike back to the battery, he was on the point of yielding up the ghost, but he held ever to the four cans of jam. Where was the rest of the detail? Dead, perhaps. Anyway, they might find that he had jam, and demand their share.

A black shape that was the *fourgon*. A cautious fumbling and the corner of the tarp was in his hand. A warm and fragrant odor of Bull Durham.

"It's Kickapoo. Let down the blank, blank tarp."

"Shut the door, you're letting in a draft."

"Did you get the jam?"

"Light a candle, put down the tarp, in Pete's name, and break out some bread," asid Kickapoo, "for I have brought each of you a can of jam, and the dump was bombed, and I am wet to my very heart. Hot dog!" said he. "I wouldn't go from here to the picket line again tonight for all the jam in France."

The four then turned on their stomachs, and lying close together, awaited the production of the jam. The gunner handed out the four cans, one to each, and then lighted a small end of candle. A curse from four throats at once. On each can were the words—"Chloride of Lime."

THE picket-line guard, walking his solitary post by the horse line, was surprized to see a figure on a bale of hay, in the attitude of a famous statue.

"Hey, guy," said he, "ain't you got no home?"

"I am thinking," said Kickapoo.

"Thinkin'! Thinkin' about what?"

"It is in my mind," said the erstwhile seller of medicine, "how mildly Sherman said it!"

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OVER THE RIM OF THE RIDGE

A FOUR-PART STORY

by HUGH PENDEXTER

PART III

Author of "Pay Gravel," "War Wampum," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

TO THE Territory of Nevada, during the silver rush of 1861, came gamblers of all sorts. At Roney's Place, while waiting for the Nevada-bound coach, Washoe, a square gambler, met two old acquaintances—"Sorry" Kane and "Feeble" Thomas. He interfered on their behalf when Bill Mayfield, a bad-man, bullied Feeble, causing him to drop rich specimens of silver ore.

The sight of the ore started the rumor that Kane and Thomas had "struck it rich," but the arrival of the coach prevented further developments.

One of the passengers of the coach was a girl, Matilda Jaimson, who later confided to Washoe that she was going to Carson City to meet her father.

At a wayside house where the passengers of the coach stopped for food, Mayfield endeavored to get the drop on Washoe, but Matilda showed she knew how to handle a rifle and forced the bully to back down.

Washoe, fearing for the girl's safety, drove her to Carson City and as her father had not yet arrived left her in charge of Miss Clapp at Sierra Seminary.

Hastening to the St. Nicholas bar, Washoe found that the rich strike made by Kane and Thomas was the chief topic of conversation.

"Kell" Hawkins, a crooked gambler, spoke slightingly of the girl and later, with the help of two friends, tried to swindle Washoe at cards.

Washoe pulled his derringer on them, and the three conspirators departed for Virginia City vowing to get even.

Kane and Thomas persuaded Washoe to accompany them to their hiding-place—a tunnel in the side of a hill—and there revealed the fact that they had not discovered a silver ledge.

"A man named Jaimson, a Tennessee cuss, gave me the ore," said Thomas. "He gave it to me so's I'd fetch a letter in and mail it."

The letter was addressed to Matilda, telling her not to come in until she heard from him.

The two old-timers then told Washoe of their search for an ancient city where gold could be had for the taking. They offered to take Washoe in as partner, but he was anxious to get to Virginia City, and with the coming of darkness he set out.

"Gentle George" was at Virginia City when Washoe arrived. His business was, the bar-tender said, "winding up folks that some one wants to git rid of."

"George," said Washoe, "just what is your game now? You might start in so we can see who's to mess up the floor. No sense in waiting."

Washoe thought George was in the pay of Kell Hawkins.

"Bless you," murmured the killer, "I'm not after you. If I were I'd have had you long before this."

Mystified, Washoe made for the Magnolia, but George entered first. Mayfield and the other three were at the bar, but they were unprepared. George, nettled at the homage paid another bad-man, insulted Mayfield, who, seeing Washoe grinning behind, concluded he was Gentle George's ally.

Washoe, though warned to go away by "Mexico," a woman whom he had once befriended, went in search of Hawkins and found him in the back room off the gambling-hall. He concluded to take the feud to the enemy, but found to his dismay not only Hawkins, but a couple of toughs named Planter and Moses, as well as Mayfield and his three pals.

"If your friend is outside he might as well come in," said Hawkins.

Washoe realized that they were afraid of his supposed ally, Gentle George.

"I'm here on my own business. I'm playing a lone hand," he insisted.

They did not believe him and declared that they were anxious for his friendship. Not until he had gone did they realize he had spoken the truth.

"Over the Rim of the Ridge," copyright, 1922, by Hugh Pendexter.

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During the ensuing quarrel Planter was shot by Mayfield, and the gang planned to tell Planter's woman, "French Fannie," that Washoe had shot him.

Washoe learned from John Blackburn, a deputy sheriff, that Gentle George was after Sorry Kane. Blackburn also told Washoe of the murder of Planter and warned Washoe that the crime might be fastened upon him. Mexico later confirmed this and added that French Fannie would shoot him on sight.

Washoe, unable to face an angry woman, fled to Flowery Diggings.

Washoe gained a new enemy when he refused to tell Gentle George the whereabouts of Sorry Kane. The proprietor of a gambling-hall told George that Washoe knew all about Kane and Thomas, and also spoke of the girl, Matilda Jaimson.

George called at the seminary, professing to be Washoe's friend, and was well received. Matilda told him that her father had struck it rich, and George was anxious to get a share. He enlisted Hawkins' aid and sent a fake telegram to the girl reading:

COME TO VIRGINY AND MEET ME AT THE MAGNOLIA.
—PAP.

Washoe received news that it was safe for him to return to Virginia City and was surprized to find Matilda singing at the Magnolia. She was well protected by Gentle George, who had evidently misrepresented Washoe to her. She plainly believed that Washoe had harmed French Fannie, who was after him for the killing of Planter.

Blackburn, on the trail of the Mayfield gang, whom he suspected of robbing the Wells-Fargo express, checked Washoe's anger at George, and the meeting of the two men resulted only in threats.

A shot at Blackburn as he emerged from Washoe's lodgings could not be proved on any one of Washoe's numerous enemies.

Washoe departed to warn Kane that George was after him and to tell him that the tunnel hiding-place had been discovered.

CHAPTER VII

WHY SORRY KANE WAS FRIGHTENED.

A TRAGEDY was being built up in the Cosy Home. All present were contributing and yet none suspected the swift approaching climax. The Home, radiating an atmosphere of drunkenness and bloody brawls, was doing the usual nightly business, with the usual argument being waged between a few one-ledge men and many two-ledge men. The latter were always in the majority as the two-ledge theory made for big business. The more ledges the more mines. Speculators, merchants, traders, and land-owners were all "many-ledgers." Those firmly entrenched on the Comstock were one-ledgers. The legal profession was taking a mighty toll from both factions.

Faced by a hopeless majority a one-ledge man never proclaimed his theory in such dives as the Cosy Home unless unbalanced by much liquor. But as the frequenters of the Home went there to drink there scarcely was an evening when some believer in the one-ledge theory did not forget to nurse his convictions in silence, and, emboldened by drink, give great offense by preaching his unpopular doctrine. As a rule these debates ended in a fight, with the offender escaping with his life because too many tried at the same time to silence him.

The ancient argument was approaching the final stage, with the line of cleavage separating the customers into two very uneven groups when a truce was called because of the appearance of a well-known and unsavory character. The newcomer entered rather precipitately and glanced back into the street before closing the door. From his border-ruffian activities in Kansas he was known as "Jayhawker." It was notorious that he was a member of Bill Mayfield's gang, and as he swaggered up to the bar with quick side-glances at the heated disputants much room was made for him. As an individual he could be put in his place; as a cog in Mayfield's organization he was the recipient of much courtesy. Bartenders were always willing to mark up his score when he was out of funds. Tonight he impressed the company as being nervous. He kept a hand on his gun as he leaned against the bar. For nearly a minute he ignored the bottle and glass awaiting his pleasure and watched the door and appeared to be expecting something to happen. Finally he relaxed his watchful attitude and waved his arm for all present to join him.

Cordial greetings were showered upon him as one-ledge and many-ledge men forgot their grievances and mingled fraternally. Jayhawker tossed off his liquor and flopped a small piece of gold on the bar, huskily directing:

"Keep 'em filled. It's my night."

The piece of gold had barely stopped spinning before every eye was wolfishly observing it. The greater number of men in the room were experienced miners. They knew Jayhawker's gold was different from any bullion ever passed over the Cosy Home bar. It appeared to have been hacked off

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a rough ingot, and this suggested an unlimited supply. By mental telegraphy the line of attack upon his secret was instantly arranged. Jayhawker was not one to be bluntly questioned. Nor did those who knew him best hope to gain any information until he reached a certain stage in his drinks.

The burly bartender led off by warmly reminding him:

"When old Jayhawker gits hold of a bit of color he don't forgit his friends. And now that tiny hunk is drunk up his friends don't forgit him, and his credit is always good here."

Jayhawker parted his beard and tossed off another drink and stared sullenly at the bartender and growled—

"I'll tell you when to give me credit."

And from his pocket he fished out another irregular piece of the precious metal and disdainfully tossed it on the bar.

A giant foreman from the Mexican mine laughed loudly and cried—

'Man looks pretty offering Jayhawker credit when he's loaded with the yaller stuff."

The crowd joined him in laughing derisively at the bartender, who pretended to be abashed. Jayhawker was flattered, and to force more encomiums sullenly remarked—

"Reckon I don't have so many friends when I ain't got the color."

A vigorous denial was entered against such heresy; and "Red" McMeen, the big foreman, expansively insisted:

"You got friends all the time, everywhere. And why? 'Cause you don't forgit them friends when you're in bonanza. And they won't ever forgit you, Jayhawker, if you're ever in borrasca. Which we all hope won't ever happen. We're mighty glad, Jayhawker, that you've struck it rich. Oughter run big."

And he craned his neck and gazed speculatively at the small piece of gold.

"Long's it runs big enough to buy plenty of licker it oughter suit you," sneered Jayhawker.

"Never a truer word spoke!" cried the bartender, flashing McMeen the signal to be more subtle.

"Hooray for any claim that'll assay out ten thousand dollars' worth o' tarantula juice to the ton!" cheered a teamster.

This appealed to the ruffian's sense of humor, and he grinned and repeated it over in his beard so he might remember to give it as his own in other company. He motioned the bartender to send the bottles down the line. Messages were flashed from man to man with the glance of an eye. Jayhawker would only talk indiscreetly when drunk. Drinks were hurriedly consumed, or allowed to seep to the floor, and the empty glasses drew more gold from the host's pocket. The latter was drinking honestly, his thirst being great. As the gathering was congratulating itself on its finesse a rat-faced fellow who ran an auction room, and who was ignorant of Jayhawker's close-mouthed propensity except when intoxicated, aroused the ire of all by tactlessly inquiring—

"Where'd you git it?"

Jayhawker turned slowly, his glass half-raised, and stared at his questioner. Then his free hand buffeted the man across the mouth and knocked him into the arms of McMeen, who hurled him toward the door and indignantly bellowed—

"Don't you ever come among decent men again till you learn your manners."

The auctioneer scuttled from the room, sobbing curses. The men enthusiastically approved of Jayhawker's manly spirit.

"As if it's for the likes of us to ask a man where his claim is when he's free with his gold," said the teamster.

"Where a hunk of gold starts its travels don't matter," philosophically remarked the bartender. "Where it ends its travels is what counts. This hunk ends its travels in the Cosy Home, and the boys look at it with friendly eyes 'cause it brings good cheer to them."

Some one violently declared this savored of real poetry, better than anything appearing in the public press, and was worthy of being embalmed in memory through the process of another round. The bartender, surprized at having flushed the Muse, and vastly pleased, weakened and stood treat. Jayhawker resented this liberality as reflecting on himself.

"I come in here to make this a free bar for a while," he growled. "I ain't saying you all ain't got the price of licker in your jeans. I'm just saying you'd better hang on to it for the time when I ain't 'round."

"By ——! That's said han'some!" applauded McMeen.

Jayhawker, less cautious, pulled out a small handful of the golden pellets and smashed them on the bar and haughtily motioned for the bartender to do his duty. The rounds came fast and furious, only one

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man consuming all that was put before him. McMeen glanced searchingly at Jayhawker's sturdy legs and winked encouragement to his associates. Others ventured to appraise the man's condition without fear of exciting his suspicions.

McMeen whispered to his neighbor:

"Don't ask a single question. When he gits so he has to hang on with his hands his tongue will limber up. Just let him talk as he will. I've seen him at it before. He's nearly ready."

Several more glasses soon sent Jayhawker's hands to the bar to steady his swaying body and sagging legs. He seemed to lose all sense of his surroundings and began muttering. The bartender no longer made even a pretense of serving the others. It was the time of waiting. McMeen stood close to the ruffian on one side, the teamster taking a similar confidential position on the other side. Jayhawker began muttering inaudible things. The line of men kept quiet. Jayhawker no longer swung his head about, but stared steadily at the bar and seemed to behold nothing beyond the whisky glass. As his field of vision thus narrowed so did his sense of hearing become dulled; and the conspirators no longer indulged in stealth.

"Shoot him one or two more quick," a man advised.

"No. Wait. Don't try to rush things and overdo it," growled McMeen.

All ears were pricked as Jayhawker's voice rose until audible to all.

"Washoe, eh? Got to be careful, eh? Was careful. Missed him. Next time I'll be more brash. Only way to git 'em is to—to git 'em. Dig in—git 'em. Boss is scared. Never was scared 'n my life."

This was interesting, but not the vital thing. Obviously Jayhawker had endeavored to kill Washoe. McMeen scowled heavily. He liked Washoe. The bartender spilled a few drops in the glass and rattled it on the bar. Mechanically Jayhawker's hand fumbled for it, found it, and went through the motion of drinking. He dropped the glass and fumbled in his pocket and found more gold and spilled several pieces in attempting to place the lot on the bar. The gold aroused some recollection for he muttered:

"Mighty rich haul. Boss must got tip in Virginy. Boss got good frien's in Virginy. Tell him things."

His audience was now keyed up to a high pitch of expectancy. The bartender repeatedly pursed his lips for silence, although scarcely a man there who was not trying to hold his breath. All ears were cocked to catch the next bit of information. The bartender picked up a piece of the gold and dropped it into the open hand. Contact with the metal again stirred the submerged memories. Jayhawker's fingers closed about it, and he was saying:

"In funny looking bars. Like some one new to the game had smelted 'em—a bar for each man. Rest hid. Boss a reg'lar Injun for smelling out stuff—Injun at hiding stuff. Knows ahead when stuff's coming. Boys reckoned we'd make haul in Virginy. Boss has a head. Took us down——"

A gun discharged outside a window, and the drunken ruffian's head smacked down on the bar. Then the legs collapsed and the body slumped to the floor. For a count of ten the spectators were incapable of speech, or motion, staring at the dead man, or the hole in the window. The bartender broke the spell by giving a howl and dropping behind the bar. Others frantically sought to share his hiding place, while some crawled under tables. But none attempted to escape by the door for fear of what might be awaiting them.

After a minute or two had passed and no one had entered the bartender ventured to raise his head. And he yelled—

"That —— weasel-faced auction thief done that!"

Red McMeen crawled from under a table with a gun in his hand, and glanced from the window to the dead man, and declared:

"Naw. He never done that. Ain't got nerve 'nough. And if he had the nerve he couldn't ever pick a man off like that with a gun-muzzle close to the glass. Mebbe it's just as well we didn't git the rest of Jayhawker's talk. Mebbe we'll all live longer."

The men jumped for cover again as the door swung open, but desisted from their frantic efforts on discovering the newcomer was John Blackburn. The deputy marshal took in the situation at a glance. Of the bartender he demanded:

"What does this mean? Who did that?"

The bartender shrugged his fat shoulders and pointed to the window, and said:

"Bullet come from the outside. You come from the outside, Blackburn. Your

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chances of knowing are better than ours."

Blackburn turned to the window and whistled softly. He stepped back into the street and stood before the perforated window. Returning to the barroom he approached the dead man and turned him over.

"Jayhawker, eh?" he muttered.

In the half-open hand was a small piece of gold bullion. He examined it critically, rose to his feet, and inquired of the bartender—

"When did he come in here?"

"Some time ago. Perhaps an hour after you and Washoe were in here."

"Spend any gold?"

The bartender hesitated, being in ignorance of what Blackburn had found in the dead man's hand. Then he surrendered before the stern gaze and passed over several pieces of gold and remarked: "Queer mine that come from. He was about to tell the boys when he was shot."

"That's why he's dead," said Blackburn. "Jayhawker was one of the gang that robbed the Carson City express-office. The gang got some bullion. It'll be better for you if you keep these pieces of gold out of your cash. They may be wanted as evidence. Jayhawker was shot by one of the gang to stop his tongue. Virginia is getting tired of this business. Some night a bell will begin ringing."

"I'm a honest man!" loudly protested the bartender, his fat face growing pasty white. "The Cosy Home don't want no truck with thieves. Take the gold along with you. The boss won't want it round. We don't want no stolen stuff here."

"No. You'll keep it and produce it when it's asked for. If it isn't identified it belongs to the house. I have one piece I found in his hand. I'll keep that. Jayhawker always talked foolish when drunk. What did he say?"

"He let on he'd been taking a shot at Washoe and missed him."

"That's true. Just a short time ago. What else?"

The bartender had no desire to get down in the deputy's bad books; but his fear of Mayfield was greater.

"Couldn't catch it all. He started to tell where he got the gold when—bang! All over for Jayhawker."

Red McMeen, now quite sober, spoke for all when he said:

"Us boys reckoned Jayhawker had made a new strike, but we'd never seen any gold in just that shape before. We was keen to find out where he got it when it all happened, just as you've been told. Mister Blackburn, who do you reckon fired that shot?"

"Who do you reckon fired it?" countered Blackburn.

McMeen gave a little shiver and grumbled:

"No, thanky. I don't reckon nothing about it. Don't want to know nothing about it. And I reckon I've had enough firewater and am going to git some sleep."

THE death of Jayhawker was but briefly mentioned by the press next morning and caused no more comment than had the death of Planter. And yet the ruffian's tragic end cost Mayfield a man and was causing Blackburn much chagrin. He had spent the evening in seeking just such a fellow in the hope of securing evidence against Mayfield. And he had arrived too late. The man's death worried him more than did the attempt upon his own life when he was leaving Washoe's room.

He was abroad early and on the watch for Washoe and went with him to breakfast. After he had finished relating the known facts about the murder Washoe refused to display much interest. He was frank to state that he was not concerned with Mayfield's rascalities so long as they did not take a personal trend.

"Of course Mayfield, or one of his men, shot the fellow to close his mouth. Too bad they wouldn't kill each other off."

"Of course," gloomily remarked the deputy marshal. "But I combed the town last night, before and after the shooting, and couldn't lay an eye on Bill, or any of his men."

"Jayhawker probably decided to break loose and enjoy a drunk after he'd carried out the boss' orders to shoot me."

"Still you say the affair isn't any of your business," ironically reminded Blackburn.

Washoe scowled and admitted:

"Why, it's getting rather personal, I'll admit. But I have other things worrying me that makes last night's clumsy play seem of no account. So long as I have a mad woman trailing me all the Mayfields in the territory don't count much."

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The waiter, who invariably served Washoe, glided to the table and pretended to be busy with his duties while he whispered—

"Bill Mayfield's in town."

"When?"

"Thirty minutes ago. With three of his men."

After the waiter had scurried away Washoe repeated the information to Blackburn. The deputy marshal smiled grimly and said:

"Bill was in town last night and got clear before I could spot him. A few minutes sooner and I'd have had him cold! When do you start to find Kane?"

"Tomorrow. Got work here I must finish first."

"Wish you were going now. With Hawkins and Mayfield back you have too many old friends in town to suit my peace of mind. And then there is George."

"There is always George. But I'm watching my corners. I don't think they'll quite dare to try anything too rank."

"Not in the daytime. It's tonight I'm thinking of."

"My sole business tonight will be watching for them. And I'm not fool enough to run any risks."

They finished their meal and parted at the door. Washoe went down to the C Street stable and was highly pleased to find that his mare, cured of her lameness, had been brought in the night before. He spent some time in petting the intelligent creature and giving careful directions as to her feed. As he walked toward the front of the stable he was surprized to meet a heavily veiled woman. He would have passed her had she not whispered:

"Senor, this is bad for you to be here. Senorita Fannie comes back."

"Little Mexico! That woman back? That is bad. When did she come?" exclaimed the startled Washoe, and he cast an apprehensive glance toward the street.

"Not here now. She come ver' quick. She come when Senor George get the words to her. Last night Senor George the telegraph send. From a girl in a dancing hall I know he find where Fannie stay in the Sacramento. The telegraph come back she is on the way here. He send more telegraph all along the road, saying she will hurry. She come anytime today, tonight. I tell you. You vamose."

"You're a good friend, Mexico. I'm leaving early tomorrow. If that woman was in town I'd leave this minute. Wish you could make her understand I didn't kill her man."

"Oh, she is mad, mad. I talk. She laugh, she tear her hair. No good. She understand when she drive the sick out of the head. Now she is mad, mad. Vamose!"

She bobbed her head to emphasize her warning and glided from the stable. Washoe remained in the stable for a few minutes, torn between fear of the half-crazed woman and the call of unfinished business deals. Taking to the street he proceeded with feverish activity to conclude several speculative deals.

At noon he went to the International for his dinner and remained for several hours in the office, trading and buying feet in a mob of speculators. Men argued for and against the one-ledge theory, but did not resort to violence. Union men and Secesh rotated to the bar in hot disputes. Lawyers with vision gathered in a corner and whispered professional secrets. A few men, who were neither absorbed by politics nor by speculation, were proclaiming the need of a vigilance committee to purge the town of gamblers, street-fighters, thieves, and murderers. One of these public-spirited ones boldly recited a long list of robberies and crimes and challenged any one within hearing to name a man who had been brought to book for any of the offenses enumerated.

The different groups began to disintegrate. From one cluster of men an anonymous voice warned—

"Better stop that talk 'less you're well heeled and are quick on the draw."

"No! I won't stop this sort of talk. I probably will be shot down in cold blood by some murderous dog. Perhaps then Virginia City will wake up and realize this town can be run by decent men instead of by cutthroats."

This defiance quite dispersed the crowd, for the fear of the desperado was heavy on the mountain slope, and might was the only law. Having believed he would be free from assaults in the daytime, Washoe had taken only his derringers when quitting his room that morning. Now that the west wind was blowing dust and gravel from the surrounding gray heights and the sun was preparing to go to bed behind Mount Davidson, the young man put aside his money-making

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affairs and took time to think about his personal safety.

When he had returned to his room and had secured his big guns and was ready for the street the stars were glittering coldly, and the evening air was unpleasantly cool. With one gun under his arm and the other on his hip he went to the International and partook of supper. While he ate he changed his mind about waiting until morning before setting forth in search of Kane. His imagination kept supplying him with pictures of French Fannie's premature arrival. All day he had been on the lookout for some of his enemies and had seen none. The thought grew up in his mind that Hawkins, George and Mayfield knew the woman was coming and had planned to keep out of sight and thereby have a perfect alibi did she act as his executioner. At least they would give her a chance to take the initiative before assailing him.

He now proposed going direct from the hotel to the stable, and thence riding down the Gold Hill road and instituting a hunt for the missing men. Reason endeavored to convince his nerves that the French woman could not arrive at the least for another twenty-four hours. And each time he told himself this he jerked his head about to see if she were entering the dining-room with one of Planter's guns in her hand. He discovered he feared her mistaken vengeance more at night than in the daytime. Now that the streets were checkered with shadows and brightly lighted areas and the crowds of excitement-seekers were tramping up and down the town, it would be very easy for the woman to pounce upon him without any warning.

He started briskly for the stable, intending to pass the Magnolia on the opposite side of the street; for he believed his enemies were there in force. And yet, when opposite the place he halted, strangely undecided. He told himself he should not enter the saloon. Did Miss Matilda happen to glimpse him her peace of mind would be disturbed. Did George happen to arrive before his regular hour he might seize the opportunity to pick a quarrel. And there was the additional risk of meeting Hawkins and Mayfield, neither of whom was to be bluffed the second time.

As he hesitated in the darkness the girl began singing, "Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground." And the pathos of it, as rendered by her sweet voice, affected him deeply. Before he realized he had come to any decision he was pressing forward to enter the place. The crowd was cheering and showering money into and around the basket at the end of the bar. His entrance was unnoticed.

ONCE inside he found it difficult to retrace his steps, as the pressure of the early comers was filling the doorway. He allowed himself to be urged toward and into the gambling hall by the human current. The hall was less crowded and there was space to move about. He discovered no signs of Hawkins or Mayfield, and he began to believe that they, like George, would not appear until the singing was finished for the evening. He held back when the men rushed to the bar. This onslaught on the bottles relieved the congestion around the door. Washoe blinked his eyes rapidly, scarcely believing what his gaze was telling him. He had not dreamed of such good luck. Feeble Thomas was furtively working his way into the barroom.

Miss Matilda had retired to the private office, and rough badinage was being tossed back and forth. Old political quarrels were revived and were quickly put down by several floor-men, redoubtable for rough-and-tumbling fighting as well as for deftness with lethal weapons. These keepers of the peace were an innovation, introduced as a compliment to the new singing-girl. Being restrained in its belligerent desires the gathering turned to horse-play and good-natured profanity. Some one recognized Feeble Thomas and shouted his name joyously and insisted he advance and drown his sorrows in "Double Rectified," an unusually rugged brand of Kansas whisky.

Thomas, never loath to imbibe, shuffled forward to join the fifth row from the bar, his eyes blinking under the many lights, his manner that of one filled with sickly dread. The store clerk who had called him by name placed a hand on his shoulder and in a rich burlesque of dignity thrust his free hand into the bosom of his coat and gravely announced:

"Gentlemen of the Territory of Nevada, it is my privilege and pleasure to present to you tonight Virginia's proud choice of auxiliary representative, Feeble Thomas, who will help our councilmen, Augustine W. Pray and J. L. Van Bokkelen, to clear

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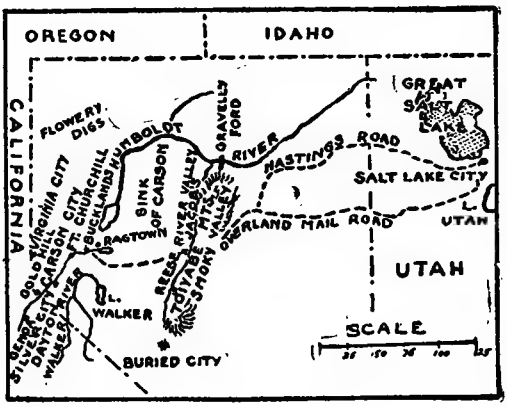
the cobwebs from their minds. Governor Nye in a personal letter to Mr. Thomas——"

Roars of laughter and much cheering drowned the rest of the ridiculous speech,



and several glasses quickly traveled over the heads of the first four rows to the shrinking man. The young clerk amiably helped him dispose of the liquor, and jovially inquired:

"You old rabbit-hearted sinner, what did you mean by trying to work up a stampede with those silver specimens? Carson City will take your hide off for making it believe you were in bonanza. Drink up and have another. It's worth it to think how those low-minded tree-cutters down there were taken in."

"Kane an' me wa'n't to blame," mumbled Thomas apologetically. "The stuff was given to me for—for mailing a letter."

This explanation was greeted with explosions of laughter as it was repeated down the bar. One man facetiously insisted that Thomas had been hired to bring black-eyed Susan daisies from the barren crest of Mount Davidson. Another declared the Magnolia would make a fortune in hiring him to appear an hour each night.

The clerk, having spent no money on his guest and still being the recipient of much liquor, sought to prolong his advantage by asking:

"Where's thatold gray rat of a pard of yours, Sorry Kane? How can you take a drink to him if you didn't fetch a dipper?"

Thomas drew back and earnestly explained:

"Ain't seen Kane for days. Him and me has parted company."

But as a humorous asset Thomas already had lost his attraction. It was drawing near the time when the girl would appear again, and the thirsty ones gave strict heed to the business of drinking. Thomas was no longer proffered drinks and yet he lingered although now apart from the closely packed ranks. Washoe worked forward so he might not lose sight of the man when the latter took to the street. The young clerk experienced a return of generosity and invited:

"Come back here, Feeble. I've just sold two building lots for mining-claims and feel rich. I'm going to fill your old hide so full of whisky that old Kane will stagger every time he gets to leeward of you."

"I sha'n't see Kane again," doggedly insisted Thomas.

The clerk became very stern and harshly reminded him that if he were detected in any evasions he would be tried before a miner's court. The suggestion instantly proved to be popular, and it was proposed to hold such a court then and there and a fit penalty be inflicted on the defendant. A young man with his right arm in a sling, standing at Washoe's elbow, muttered—

"Now they've got started and are half-drunk they'll carry the joke too far by scaring the old fool to death."

"Bad place for a man with a busted arm, Neighbor," remarked Washoe. "Some one will be bumping into you."

"It's my wrist. Smashed to pieces," was the bitter reply. "Had to come here as I'm looking for the man who did it."

"I've seen you down at Carson."

"Mulligan's my name. Probably saw me drunk. I've paid handsome for my last drunk—my very last drunk."

"Who's the man you're looking for?" curiously inquired Washoe.

"Thanks. But I'll know him when I see him."

SUDDENLY the boisterous preparations to try Feeble before a mock court ceased. Washoe stood on tiptoe and switched his gaze over the room and beheld Gentle George, an hour before his time, standing just inside the door. The crowd pressed back on all sides to give him room. Mulligan cursed softly on finding himself hedged in. With his "stove-pipe" hat towering above the nondescript head-coverings, George saw no one but Feeble Thomas. He slowly advanced

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toward him. The facetious young clerk suddenly became absorbed in a drink. George halted beside the recluse and stared at him steadily. Thomas returned the gaze timidly, but did not seem to sense any unusual fear.

"Is your name Kane, Sorry Kane, by any chance?" asked George.

Whenever George halted a man and spoke to him he was sure of the spectators' keenest attention, for his presence in any gathering contained the potentials of a tragedy.

"Nary a chance, stranger," faintly replied Thomas. "I know him, but I ain't him."

"What do you want to lie for?" murmured George. "You're Sorry Kane."

"I ain't lying. You ain't no call to say that to me when any man here can tell you my name's Thomas."

"That's his name, Mister George," eagerly spoke up the clerk. "Sorry Kane's his partner."

"Where is your friend Kane now?" demanded George.

"Lor'! I don't know. Him and me has parted company."

George's open hand caught him across the mouth, the resounding *smack* being audible all over the room.

"I asked you to tell me where your friend is now?" he softly reminded.

Thomas' face was screwed up in an indescribable expression and he held his hands convulsively clasped before his breast. He shrilly insisted:

"I tell you I don't know. Him and me has parted——"

A second blow interrupted the denial and sent Thomas reeling against the man behind him. The sheer brutality of it filled more than one mind with homicidal desires, but the roving gaze of the opaque pale eyes restrained any show of interference.

In a low, even voice George demanded:

"Now, for the last time, —— you! Where is Kane?"

Thomas kept his hands clasped before him as he glanced about to discover a line of escape. Then with a loud groan he raised his arms across his face and persisted:

"Gawd's truth! I don't know. Don't hit me again!"

George drew back his open hand, but before he could deliver the third blow a light figure had mounted the bar and the Jaimson girl was indignantly warning—

"This has gone far enough!"

And as George jerked his head about it was to stare into the muzzle of the squirrel-rifle. He had been standing with his back to the bar and until he turned she had not recognized him. In astonishment she exclaimed:

"You, Mister George? You, hitting that poor, feeble-hearted critter?"

George drew in a deep breath and shifted his threatening gaze to cover the gaping spectators and evenly replied:

"You don't understand, Miss Matilda. I'm trying to make a liar tell the truth. I'll explain later."

"I ain't a liar, miss!" quavered Thomas' voice; and he raised both clinched hands above his head. "You're the Jaimson gal. whose pap hired me to send a writing to you, saying as how he'd struck it rich, and for you to stay in Sacramento till you heard again from him. I'm called 'Feeble' Thomas, being that poor in health and lacking speerit."

The crowd stirred uneasily at this mention of Pap Jaimson's rich strike. George's face paled with suppressed rage as he saw his well-guarded secret about to become public property. With a low-voiced curse he hissed at Thomas—

"Keep your mouth shut, you old fool." Then to the girl:

"I'll explain it all later, Miss Matilda. It's best not to talk about it here. This man will take a little walk with me——"

"No! no!" hoarsely cried Thomas. Then to the staring, curious crowd: "I don't know this man. He ain't nothing to me. I ain't got any call to walk alone with him. He'll kill me. That's what he reckons on doing. You can see it in his face. Kill me like a dog. He's smashed me in the face three times. I've seen—Oh, Lawd! Not that! Not that! You men keep this man back till I git out of here. I come here looking for a friend. He ain't here, or he'd stepped in and stopped this bully from knocking me 'round."

None of the onlookers made a move. Several eyed Thomas in pity. George clutched his victim by the arm and began pushing him toward the door. The girl shrilly called out:

"None of that, Mister George. Take some one your own age. Drop him, I say!"

The squirrel-rifle leaped to her shoulder. George laughed good-naturedly, and, maintaining his grip, replied:

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"You wouldn't shoot *me*, Miss Matilda. Any one would think that I ate people alive."

By this time Washoe had edged his way to within a few feet of the two men. He had his belt-gun drawn and held down at his side. The girl saw him for the first time, and the rifle began to sag. George, with eyes only for her slight figure, smiled in triumph, believing he had conquered her. But the rifle became steady again, and she was warning:

'Let go of that man and come towards the bar. I won't kill you, but I'll smash a hand. And I hit what I shoot at."

White with passion George—not yet having observed Washoe behind him—slowly released his crushing grasp on Thomas' arm and slowly advanced toward the bar. He knew the girl would keep her promise; and he also knew that should he lose the use of one hand he would soon go down with a mob on top of him. The girl's rifle shifted to cover Washoe, and she hissed—

'Git out of here quick, or I shoot!"

Washoe pushed Thomas violently to the door and was making after him when George wheeled about. It required two or three seconds for him to recognize Washoe's features under the low-drawn hat. With a snarling animal cry his hand flashed out a gun. At the same moment a hand appeared over a brawny miner's shoulder and discharged a revolver. The whistle of the bullet within half an inch of the killer's head caused him to dodge involuntarily, and his own lead went wild and smashed into the open door a foot behind the retreating Washoe. The place was in an uproar immediately, with men ducking and dodging and crashing into each other as they endeavored to find cover. The girl alone retained her position.

George sought in vain to locate his unknown assailant, and was equally futile in his efforts to gain the street. The panic-stricken mob, now fighting to pass through the door, effectually blocked his path. He used his two heavy guns as clubs, but by the time he had battered his way to the door there was nothing to be seen of Washoe or Thomas. Nearly insane with rage he turned back and plowed his way through the milling mass and hoarsely demanded—

"Who fired that shot at me?"

"Don't shoot, George! For —— sake don't shoot!" screamed the man in line with the killer's right hand gun. "Fellow with right arm in a sling fired it afore anyone knew what he was up to."

"There he goes!" screamed another man.

George spun about in time to glimpse the pale face of the Carson City reveler, whom he had knocked out of the saddle, but the man was gone and vanished in the crowd now filling the street before the killer could fire.

With a great effort at calmness George replaced his weapons, and announced:

"I know who he is. I'll get him soon. Now the drinks are on me, and then we'll have some singing to soothe our tired nerves."

The attack on the bar was simultaneous, and men laughed and joked hysterically and felt very grateful to George for sparing their lives. After the general thirst had been quenched George tossed some gold-pieces on the bar and nodded to the frightened proprietor to have the singer entertain.

Miss Matilda had retreated to the office when the drinking began. The proprietor went after her, but soon returned, his heavy face mottled with trouble. Behind him came Miss Matilda, her light hat covering her curls and the rifle under her arm. She saved the proprietor further embarrassment by announcing—

'Just for what happened here tonight there won't be any more singing here tonight."

The crowd remained silent. George flushed slightly, removed his tall hat and bowed low, and said:

"We can scarcely blame you, little woman. It serves us right. But if you understood how I have been provoked you'd think more kindly of me. Two men were in this room tonight to shoot me when I wasn't looking. I cuffed a man who lied to me. Surely my fault isn't unpardonable. I'll walk home with you and carry your basket——"

"I walk alone," she bitterly broke in. "And there won't be any basket for me tonight. I've sung only one song. You and the others spoiled the rest. You all seem to think a heap more of fighting and drinking than you do my singing. I go alone."

And with head up and the small chin thrust forward she left the room; nor did George attempt to follow her.

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ONCE outside of the saloon Washoe had hurried Thomas to the rear of the C Street stable. Not until they were back of the rambling structure did he take time to ask—

"Why did you come here?"

"To find you. To git help. Kane's hiding down the Steamboat Springs road. We got your word through Blackburn. We lit out, but not very far. I scouted the tunnel and see Hawkins sneak in and come out with Sorry's book about the Count. Then I knew we'd got to hoof it and find new quarters. I wanted Sorry to go over the ridge, but he won't. He's scared for his life, yet he won't budge from this side of the mountains."

"What's he scared of?"

"That's for him to tell. I'm sworn to keep my trap shut. Who's that man they call George? I've heard of a George some years ago who was a hellion. But he must 'a' been dead a long time."

"You saw the same George in the Magnolia," was the grim reply. "Gentle George. Run out of California by the vigilants in Fifty-six."

"I didn't know that. Never entered my head he was the real George," muttered Thomas. "And he slapped my face! Oh, Lawd! But I feel 'shamed of myself!"

"He can slap Bill Mayfield's face, or Kell Hawkins'. So you needn't feel cut up about it. How did you come here?"

"Afoot," brokenly replied Thomas. "It's only three miles to where Sorry's hiding."

"You showed real grit, Feeble," comforted Washoe. "There wasn't a man in the room who would have refused to speak, as you did, when George gives orders. You two must dig out of the country for a while. You'll need horses. Stay here while I get my mare and mounts for you and Sorry. If he won't trust me and talk he can shift for himself. I don't know what the game is, but I'll know something about it after I've talked with Sorry. I have troubles of my own and can't spend time trying to help any one when I have to go it blind."

"He slapped my face!" moaned Thomas. "And me a old man! To think of the shame of it! What wouldn't I have give just to have had Dragoon Jackson at my elbow when he was cuffing me 'round! Jackson would 'a' made him chaw dirt!"

He broke off and sobbed so bitterly that Washoe deferred getting his mare until he could quiet him.

"You must hush, Thomas. You must be a man," he whispered.

"Yah! Be a man after being slapped in the face afore a whole parcel of men! If only Dragoon could 'a' come back to life for sixty seconds! He being called that for his knack of using the old forty-four caliber Dragoon revolver back in the later Forties. Dragoon would 'a' made him rub his nose on the floor. No one stepped on Dragoon's toes and ever talked much about doing it."

"They'd both killed each other, most likely, and it would have been a good job for each," growled Washoe. "What I heard when a youngster on the other side of the ridge of Jackson's doings wouldn't make me want to call him a friend. A bloody-minded devil. World's better off with him dead."

"No matter how bad a man is there's usually some one who likes him," muttered Thomas wistfully. "I ain't upholding him and his evil ways. I'm just saying no gun-fighter could slap my face if Dragoon Jackson was nigh. Well, well. Dragoon has finished his killings and is buried down in Texas. Git the nags. I'll hold myself in, only don't tell Kane about it. But if you could 'a' seen Dragoon a-swinging them nine-inch guns—each weighing four'n half pounds they was that hefty—and going into action with his long hair flying— There! I'm through. Git the nags. Dragoon's dead, and Feeble Thomas, who's slapped and laughed at and put upon, still lives."

Washoe entered through the rear door and whispered briefly to the night hostler, and soon emerged, leading the mare. The hostler brought out two horses and helped Thomas to mount. The old man meekly explained, as he settled himself in the saddle—

"Ain't rid a hoss for years."

The horse, skittish for lack of exercise, pranced sideways in a most lively fashion.

"You ain't lost your seat, old one," murmured the hostler. "You'll do. Who leads the extra?"

"I will. No talk about this, Clancy."

"It would be like me to go blatting, Mister Washoe," was the indignant reply.

WASHOE led the way down the slope, bowing his head against the sharp edge of the wind. The street throngs also hugged in their chins and bowed their heads and hastened to find the

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warmth of barroom, gambling-hall, or dance-hall. The two men rode clear of the town without being recognized, and as they cantered along, the three animals abreast, Feeble regretted—

"Derned shame to take you out here."

"I'm glad to be out. I had planned to start for Gold Hill and look you up when you came into the Magnolia. Your coming is a good bit of luck for me. Now I can get back to town before morning."

"That man George trailing you?"

"Worse than George."

"Then I wish most mortally that Dragoon Jackson could come back to life long enough to shoot the scut to pieces."

"It's a woman. I don't believe even Jackson could empty a gun at her. Still I don't know. I've heard some tough yarns about him."

"Oh, they was lies if they said he'd ever harm a woman," protested Thomas.

"This woman has a wrong notion about me. She thinks I've wronged her and she's intending to kill me. I'm hoping John Blackburn can talk to her and make her understand certain things. I'm going back to find Blackburn, then I'll skip out and lay low till I know the woman has changed her mind."

They rode in silence for the next mile or two. At last Feeble drew rein and sounded a long, quavering cry. After a few seconds the cry was repeated some distance from the road. They came to a halt and waited. Soon a voice anxiously called out—

"Who is it?"

"Feeble and Washoe and a hoss for you."

"Thank the Lawd you've come. Over this way. Better light and lead the hosses."

The three were soon standing together in the cold starlight. Kane eagerly began—

"You've heard about that devil of a gambling man going to our tunnel?"

Washoe squatted on his heels and replied:

"I know all about it. I don't urge you to talk, but if you can trust me, go ahead. If you can't talk take the horse and ride for it, but don't look to me for any more help. I've already got Gentle George after me for refusing to tell where you fellows were hanging out."

"I don't know this man George. Never seen him," said Kane. "He ain't got no call to hunt for me."

"Then quit riding from him and ride back to town and meet him and ask him what he wants of you," grumbled Washoe.

"But you say he come from Salt Lake City," whispered Kane.

"Just to find you. Yes. And I'm chilly and must be getting back."

"He was sent!" muttered Kane, his voice trembling. "They sent him. It's like my shadder: I can't ever git rid of it."

"——, man! If there's any danger dogging you, why keep it from your friends? Whoever is after you knows he's after you. What extra risk in telling me? I can't and won't go it blind. I'm willing to help you if I can. Maybe I can't even if you told me all. But I certainly sha'n't waste any time trying if you can't trust me. You did me a good turn: I'm ready to do you one if it's in my power."

Kane thrust forward his head, as if afraid the shrewd night wind would blow his words broadcast, and whispered:

"Feeble knows. This man George must know, or he wouldn't be after me. I'll trust you, Washoe. None of your folks is Mormons, be they?"

"They were all Methodists. All dead now."

Feeble drew a long breath and began:

"IN JUNE—it was the twenty-seventh; never can forgit that date and always shiver when it comes around—of 1847. I was in Carthage on that day. Carthage, Illinoy. With the whole country to roam around in it was my bad luck to be in that town on the twenty-seventh of June."

He paused, and Washoe impatiently prompted:

"Well, what of it? You were there."

"What of it?" passionately repeated Kane. "An old man at forty-four years of age. That's what 'of it'. Fourteen years of hiding and misery; fourteen years of seeing death for me in every stranger. That's what of it! Just that one day in that Illinoy town changed my whole life, sent me into hiding out here in this forsaken spot, and then kept me from making a fortune out of silver ledges."

"Git along! Git along!" mumbled Thomas. "You've made a beginning. Now finish it. They may be hunting for us now."

His words were so many spurs. Kane started convulsively and cocked his head

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to catch the sound of any pursuing horsemen. The road was quiet enough. Then he resumed, speaking rapidly:

"I was in Carthage when Joe Smith and his brother Hiram was put in the jail. I was thirty years old and a younker at heart. Folks said I'd never quit being a boy. I was there, curious as a child to watch the doings. Then came the mob and dragged the prisoners out and shot them! Murdered Joe Smith, who was the head of the church."

He paused to get his breath, and continued:

"I was seen there by Mormons. I didn't have any part in it, but I soon found I was a marked man. I got the name of taking part in the shooting. I went west and lived among Injuns and trappers. But wherever I went I carried with me the feeling that I was being chased. So I didn't stay in one place very long. Then came the rush to Californy. I was sure I could lose myself in the crowds pouring into the gold-diggings. I met Bill Mayfield there. He was rough and had a bad name, but he never troubled me any. I felt sort of proud to ask him to drink and say, 'Howdy'. Other men were scared of him.

"One night a Mormon came into a camp on the American and saw me talking with Bill. After I'd quit the bar he asked Bill what name I went by. I was using my real name—which ain't Kane. A friend heard him. Heard Bill tell him. Heard the stranger hint about me being wanted and worth considerable money dead. A friend came and told me that night, and I skinned out. I came over the mountains and lost myself in the Carson valley. I let my beard and hair grow and took the name of Kane. When my beard came out it was white as it is now. I looked thirty years older'n I was. I didn't believe I'd be known; but I didn't dare to mix with men.

"Then they put through that cussed stage road to fetch people here quick; and I kept closer'n ever. I'd have dug out if it hadn't been for the gold city south of Reese River valley. I've told you how I happened on that after sneaking through Utah and striking the Humboldt. But it was Mormons chasing me that drove me from the immigrant road and down the Smoky valley. I didn't dare do any prospecting, let along mining. But I vowed I'd make a fortune out of the gold buried out there in the sand. So I hung on; thinking every year made me safer.

"I met Feeble, and we come to be pards. I found out I could trust him; he knew he could trust me. I told him my two secrets: what I was afraid of, and what I hoped to find in the desert. He acted as my eyes, as I didn't dare travel to the east. He went in my place and hunted for the lost city. When he would get out of grub he would make for the Humboldt and earn something by guiding a wagon-train this far on the Californy road. He'd seen that circlet of gold. He knew I'd found it just as I said. He believes in it. And I reckon that's about all; and if you ever tell you'll have my blood on your hands. This man George has been hired to come out here and kill me. The Mormons have lost control of this country and can't act openly."

"I won't tell," assured Washoe.

He pondered over the fantastic story. He would have laughed at it had he heard it prior to George's arrival. But it did seem monstrous that a man should lose his life and yet live on, because of a shadowy fear always at his heels.

"If only old Dragoon Jackson hadn't kicked the bucket he'd do for this George mighty sudden!" sighed Thomas. "For any friend of mine would be a friend of his."

"But he's dead," mumbled Kane. "Any talk, Washoe?"

Washoe advised:

"I believe you two had better disappear until those chaps are cleaned up. There's a ring of them: Hawkins, Mayfield, and George and their friends. They've set a woman on my trail. If she doesn't bring me down mighty soon they'll take the game into their own hands. As it is I've been shot at already. But it's the woman I'm scared of. I can't fight against a woman. When it comes to the others John Blackburn will stand behind me. Virginia will wake up soon and clean house. With those fellows killed off, or driven out of the country, you won't have anything to fear. So, clear out. If you know where you're going, tell me. Then I can get word to you when the slate's wiped clean."

"I know a good place," said Thomas. "Big, dry cave in the Humboldt Range within a few miles of where the road to the Unionville camp cuts through."

"I won't leave the country," declared Kane. "They can kill me before I'll leave the territory. I'll get that buried gold south of the Reese valley, or die trying."

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Washoe recalled what Blackburn had told him about Jayhawker's death in the Cosy Home, and wondered if there was any connection between the curious shipment of gold and Kane's belief in the buried city. Blackburn had learned from the Carson City express office that the gold had been shipped at Jacob's station on the Reese. He gave the facts to the two men as he had received them, and added—

"Blackburn is convinced that Mayfield, or one of his men killed Jayhawker to stop him telling things."

The effect on Kane was tremendous. For a time he forgot his fear and was hysterically courageous in defying Mayfield and all others who would wrest the buried treasure from him. After Thomas had managed to quiet him down to coherencies he passionately continued:

"It's mine! Some one's found the buried city! Some one's dug up my gold! They got a load of stuff where I only found one piece! I won't have it, I tell you! Mayfield stole the stuff, but he never found it. Jayhawker couldn't tell, nor Bill Mayfield, where it come from. But some one, out there," and he dramatically pointed toward the east, "has stumbled upon it. I won't have it so. Even now, this minute, they may be camping by the spot, waiting for sunrise to finish the job. I'll hide up in no cave. I'll go to Reese River. I'll go to the desert south of it. It ain't more'n twenty miles south of the end of the valley. It all belongs to me. If any one's there ahead of me I'll—I'll——"

"There! There!" soothed Thomas. "At the worst some one's just happened on to a small parcel of the stuff. The town's still hid by the sand. No one knows about it. There's gold enough there—if there's any—for dozens of folks. What was sent through on the stage don't 'mount to shucks. We'll both go there. I know the country, and we've got to go somewhere. We'll start right off and pick up some grub along the road at one of the stations—that is, if Washoe can fix it so we can ride these hosses."

"There as well as anywhere else," agreed Washoe, relieved at the prospect of having them far removed from Virginia City. "Go by all means. I'll stand good for the horses. And, Thomas, don't forget to look up the man Jaimson, who had you write a letter to his girl."

"He was camping with his wagon within four miles of the station," said Thomas.

"Be sure you find him again. Tell him his girl is in Virginia City waiting for him to come. Tell him she got his last message, calling her to Virginia City, and that she went to town before learning he would be delayed. Tell him what she is doing, singing in the Magnolia, and that it's best he should go to her at once. Now be off. Hope you'll find tons of gold. Hope soon to send you word it's all right for you to come back." Then he was mounted and galloping back to Virginia City.

CHAPTER VIII

WASHOE COMES AND GOES

THE dread of meeting Planter's woman was working on Washoe's mind with accumulative effect when he reentered the town. Only an intuitive fear that some evil was about to befall Miss Matilda could have drawn him back. He had no definite program except to find John Blackburn and enlist his aid against something not yet definable.

He directed the night hostler to rub down the mare and to have her saddled and ready for instant flight. There was great consternation on the hostler's rugged face when Washoe emerged from the darkness and led his mare into the light of a lantern. When Washoe had finished speaking the hostler earnestly warned:

"I tell you, Mister Washoe, Virginy is talking more loud tonight. Whole town's gabbing about what happened at the Magnolia, and most of the talk is twisted. Some are saying you tried to pot George in the back, and that the little singing-lady made you quit with her rifle. Some believe the little lady is scared of you and didn't dare sing for the boys tonight along of your being there. Your friends know that stuff is —— lies, but if they should get up a hemp party tonight they'd just as soon stretch you as the next man."

"Heard anything about French Fannie getting back to town?" nervously asked Washoe.

"I ain't heard nothing 'bout her. But you just git back on that mare and ride down the hill before certain fellers learn you're here."

"Thanks, Clancy. But only the French

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woman can make me run. Have the mare ready near the back door. I may come a-flying and have to ride for it."

Turning up his coat collar and pulling his hat well forward he took to the mean, straggling street leading up the slope, bowed his head to the cold wind and gained one of the cross streets where Blackburn had a room. The house was dark and his friend's room showed no light. Not caring to arouse the family he accepted the risk of being shot for a prowler by stealing to the window and tapping on it. Getting no response he tried the window and found it unfastened. Inserting the point of his knife he managed to raise it a few inches and softly called his friend by name. Satisfied that Blackburn had not returned, he closed the window, and flattened against the side of the house as a group of men clumped heavily by. The events of the evening were topmost in their minds and one was declaring:

"My money is on George. He's just a machine. No young feller that gits het up under the collar has any show when stacking up ag'in George's game."

"Not 'less the unusual happens. There's a turn in every road. George's had things his own way——" And the rest was lost.

"I won't get 'het up under the collar' when I meet George," Washoe told himself as he stole back to the street. "He's got away with lots of fights because of his reputation as a killer. Had his man as good as dead before he pulled a gun. But he ain't got me dead yet."

He was now entering upon the more hazardous task of seeking Blackburn in the better lighted section of the town. And he did not even know what he would request of the deputy. He could not rid himself of the conviction that this night was one of grave peril for the Jaimson girl, however. Without any reason to bolster up the notion he was believing she stood in need of a friend. He was as firmly convinced another sunrise would see the French woman back in town, and did she meet him she would shoot him. A dead man would be of no aid to Miss Matilda.

Recalling Blackburn's canvas of the cheaper resorts the night before he followed the cross-street, scuttling through the intersecting section of one of the main thoroughfares, and entered an area of lights and shadows. From the windows he reconnoitered several drinking and gambling places. Failing in his quest he proceeded to the Cosy Home. Except for a few drunken men in the corner clumsily trying to play cards this place was deserted. For a minute he viewed the room through the window, standing where Jayhawker's murderer must have stood. The tragedy was marked by a piece of wrapping-paper pasted over the perforated glass. The bartender was seated at the end of the bar, his head thrown back. He appeared to be sleeping.

Washoe stole to the door and entered. He was nearly up to the bar before the bartender's head came erect. The man yawned and rose to his feet and made ready to serve. Then the small eyes protruded and the fat face became very apprehensive. With a frightened glance at the tipsy card-players he leaned against the bar and hoarsely whispered:

"Three or four guns are aching to plug you, Washoe. Git out of town quick! Any friend of John Blackburn's is a friend of mine. But there's them who would kill me for saying it."

"Citizens haven't formed any law and order committee yet, have they?"

"Nothing like that; but that's coming fast. You're wanted sorter personal. It's much as my hide's worth to say it, but some of Mayfield's boys was in here not more'n half a hour ago asking about you. Right after them come old Moses, Kell Hawkins' pard. He don't come to the Cosy when he wants a snort of licker, or a card-game. Licker ain't good 'nough for him here even if it's the same they set on the Magnolia bar. And as for games, we're too gentle and timid to suit him. He wants big stakes. But he drifted in, pretended to take a drink, and asked lots of questions 'bout you."

"Some day he'll be in luck and find me," mumbled Washoe, hunching over the bar and keeping his back to the windows. "Planter's woman shown up yet?"

The bartender shook his head and set out a bottle and nervously polished a glass.

"I'm trying to find Blackburn. Seen him this evening? I must get word to him."

"He was here early in the evening. Ain't seen him since. The killing of Jayhawker has killed our trade for a bit. Boys 'fraid the place will be shot up by some of the Mayfield gang. If you'll leave a writing for Blackburn I'll give it to him if he comes in." He was anxious for Washoe to go. To

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expedite his departure he placed paper and pencil on the bar.

Washoe wrote a few lines, omitting Blackburn's name and refraining from signing it. It beseeched the deputy marshal to watch over the girl's safety, and as Washoe perused it he knew it would impress his friend as being incoherent.

"Probably will think I'm drunk, or crazy," he muttered. Then to the impatient bartender. "There's no names mentioned in this. Blackburn will understand when you say it's from me."

"I tell you, Washoe, they're hunting your trail mighty keen. Whole town knows George has said he'd git you. Why, if one of them devils should peek through the winder now and see you standing here they'd kill both of us. You'd better go."

Perspiration made the fat face glisten. Washoe took pity on him and said:

"I will. If that note gets to Blackburn you'll find it's worth your while. One more question. What do they say about the fellow with one arm in a sling who took a shot at George?"

The bartender's eyes popped wide.

"New one to me. I only hear what's brought in. I heard about you taking a shot at him, but nothing 'bout nobody else."

Washoe grinned sourly.

"Not speaking very well for my shooting," he remarked. "Go back to sleep."

He took to the street and proceeded to the International, but did not enter. Taking up his position on a corner, with his collar and hat shielding his face he studied the shifting groups of men through the windows and endeavored to keep an eye on the men passing him in both directions. The wind cut to the bone and those abroad were largely concerned with finding shelter without returning to lonely, squalid quarters. For the sake of warmth and sociability many of the passers-by would run grave risks in entering drinking-saloons; for more than a few innocent bystanders had been shot and killed during barroom brawls that were constantly reaching the homicidal point.

Many of the homesick wanderers were bound for gambling dives, where they were destined to be fleeced if they laid a bet, and were assured of assault by knife or pistol did they denounce a sharper. Yet they pressed on, willing to risk anything rather than to remain in their cramped and often miserable lodgings, or endure the shrewish blast roaring ceaseless through the steep streets. The Cosy Home might lose its trade for a few nights, yet its patrons were seeking forgetfulness in liquor in other resorts fully as unsavory and dangerous. None of these jostling, hurrying men had eyes for the silent figure on the corner.

WASHOE did not care to enter the office or barroom of the hotel, where he might encounter a group of his enemies. His view through the windows was constantly being blocked by pedestrians and his survey of the shifting groups was very incomplete. He was concluding he must shift his ground when a man emerged from the office and stood for a moment in the light streaming from a window. Washoe recognized him, and straightened up to follow and accost him. But it was not necessary for him to pursue, for the man came toward him, walking with the quick, energetic step of an aggressive nature. Washoe waited until he was abreast of him and then called out:

"Mr. Stewart. Just a moment, please."

William M. Stewart, recently elected to the first session of the legislature as councilman from Empire City, and already entering upon a legal career that was to net him nearly a quarter of a million dollars a year in fees from several Comstock companies, halted and directed his keen glance at the figure in the shadows. Washoe took a step forward and pushed back his hat, then drew it down to his eyes.

The lawyer recognized him and stepped to one side and in a low voice exclaimed:

"If you value your life you're foolish to be in Virginia tonight, Washoe. They were saying in the hotel that you had left town. I'm sorry to find the gossip isn't true. Don't you know that three or four distinct gangs of desperadoes have been searching for you? They gave up the hunt only when satisfied you had fled."

"I did go, but had to come back, Mr. Stewart. I must see Deputy Marshal Blackburn before morning. I wanted to ask you if you've seen him in the hotel."

"No. He hasn't been in there at least for the last hour, or I would have noticed him." Then sharply: "Why must you see him before morning? What's to happen that will prevent you seeing him in the

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morning—except the risk of your staying here that long."

Washoe gave a short laugh which contained no merriment and savagely replied. "Keno! That's it. I don't dare be here after sunrise."

"Then you have some of your senses left. The quicker you go the better for your health, Washoe."

"It's not the bad-men I'm afraid of," Washoe hastened to explain. "It's a woman." And in a few words he told of French Fannie's insane lust for vengeance.

"Planter needed killing, all right, but I never threw a gun on him," he added. "And I'll run from that woman quicker'n I would from the devil."

"So would I," readily said Stewart. "But I must talk plain to you, Washoe. There are others in town besides desperadoes who are hostile to you. We're almost on the edge of some hysterical house-cleaning. And your card record is against you. Any vigilance movement will go far, usually too far, in the desire to make a clean sweep. Many a man who thought he was betting on a sure thing and got cleaned out will set up a howl against all gamblers. If I were you I'd go away right now."

Washoe shook his head doggedly and insisted:

"No; I must see Blackburn. My card record isn't any worse than that of the business and professional men I've played with. No one yet ever called me crooked. Besides, my *business* is speculation."

Stewart smiled in quiet amusement. Ever since leaving California to try his fortune in the new territory he had had a speaking acquaintance with Washoe. Although only ten years older than Washoe he looked upon the young man as scarcely being more than a boy; and he was quite familiar with his activity in acquiring and selling dubious mineral holdings. With litigations under his direction that would call for expenditures of millions he yet had time to pause and satisfy his curiosity as to the young man's persistence in tarrying in town when several desperate characters were wishing to find him.

"Your staying here seems to pivot on seeing the deputy marshal. If you care to tell me why you must see him perhaps we can eliminate that necessity."

Washoe condensed his story and put the lawyer in possession of the salient facts. Stewart's interest was not lessened when he learned that Matilda's father was supposed to have struck it rich in new diggings. Rich ledges meant more litigation. However, it was not the professional side of his nature that was keeping him standing in the cold wind, but a genuine desire to assist the young speculator.

"You show a legal mind in presenting your facts," said Stewart. "But you lack logic in deciding a line of action based upon those facts. Lawyers do not always advise the direct course but in this instance you are wasting time in pursuing a roundabout way. Instead of hunting for the deputy marshal why don't you go to the girl, the one most concerned, insist on seeing her, and warn her that you fear some harm may come to her. Having done that—scoot! I'll make it a point to locate Blackburn the first thing in the morning and tell him all you would tell him. And it's rather a sorry opinion you have of the decent element when you assume ruffians can annoy a young girl in Virginia City without being brought up with a piece of rope. Now I know what's worrying you I can assure you that nothing disagreeable can happen to the young woman. There are enough honest men in town to protect her. Forget all about it after you've seen her, and dig out."

"You put it mighty pleasing. It's good of you, Mr. Stewart. The young woman didn't act very friendly to me the last time I talked with her. They'd told her those rotten lies, and I couldn't deny them. The truth would have sounded too fishy. And it never came into my head to go to her."

"Always be open and direct, and act for yourself when you can afford it," whimsically advised the lawyer. "Now that I've given you several thousand dollars' worth of advice, measured by my watch, I must be going. Leave town till the atmosphere clears."

"Just as soon as I've seen the young lady I'll ride for it," promised Washoe. "And I'd like to do something for you, Mr. Stewart. If you can get hold of any feet in the Gopher Hole claim, Flowery Diggings, grab 'em up. I hold fifty feet. I'll sell you half. But get 'em. Then you'll get back the several thousand dollars you've spent on me, and a lot more."

"Washoe, you did something for me when you sold me twenty feet in the Black Sam last Spring. That was a sure thing, as I

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recall it. I believe I paid a hundred a running foot."

Washoe flushed in the darkness. Black Sam had quickly declined to a dollar a foot, with no takers. "It did look good," he defended. "But there's no mistake about the Gopher Hole. I was out there when they were uncovering a rich ledge."

Stewart laughed heartily and reminded him: "I find claims pay best when they get into court. Good-night, and good luck."

This conversation did Washoe a world of good. He marveled that his common sense had not prompted him to do all the things the lawyer had suggested. Now that he was getting a correct perspective of the situation he felt ashamed of himself for being a dullard. Of course Miss Matilda had only to speak to be protected. And if she lacked suspicion of any danger, some of her friends had only to speak to surround her with champions. With Stewart cognizant of her lonely position all her troubles were dissipated. With his heart much lightened Washoe hurried to Taylor Street and walked back and forth examining hovels and log-cabins.

HE HALTED before one cabin and noted the attempts to make the rough interior homelike. Pictures from an illustrated weekly decorated the wall and there were bright calico curtains at the window. The curtains were not quite pulled together; and when Washoe discovered two children sleeping in a home-made crib he knew he had found the right house.

He rapped on the door. After a brief wait a voice inside demanded—

"Who is it?"

"A friend of Miss Matilda's. Tell her Washoe must speak to her for a minute!"

The door opened a crack and the barrel of a revolver slid through the narrow aperture. The woman said:

"You may be a friend of hers, or she may just think you are. I never heard her speak of you. But if you are a real friend you will go and look her up."

"Look her up? You don't mean she isn't here?" gasped Washoe.

His sincerity impressed the woman and the revolver was withdrawn and the door was thrown half-open.

"She ain't here," informed the woman. "And it's long past time for her to come home. She's a good girl, but she's working in a poor place. She doesn't see the evil in that saloon, but my man has told me enough for me to know it ain't any place for her. If I could 'a' sent word to my man, or had anyone to mind the children, he or me would be hunting for her now."

"Not come yet!" muttered Washoe, a definite fear swamping him. "Why, she must have left the Magnolia a long time ago!"

"She ain't come. If I hadn't been desperate afraid on her account I wouldn't be talking with you even with a gun in my hand. Find the tall man in the shiny 'stove-pipe.' The one she calls 'Mister George.' He always walks as far as this door with her. If any deviltry's afoot he's back of it."

"I'll find him. If any hurt's come to her I'll kill him," hoarsely vowed Washoe, turning away and running up the street.

Where was the solace of Stewart's words now? Where was the impregnable barrier thrown about innocence by the decent element in the town? Muttering fierce threats of vengeance and with no further attempt at stealth Washoe hastened up the steep slope and made direct for the Magnolia. Outside the entrance he paused only long enough to view the barroom. The bulk of patronage was in the back hall as shown by the slack trade at the bar. Scarcely a dozen men were in the barroom and none of his enemies was among these.

The door to the gambling hall was closed as was the custom after the program of singing was over for the night. Loosening the gun on his hip and feeling of the gun under his left arm, Washoe pushed back his hat and entered. Among the men leaning against the bar were several acquaintances. These stared at him in amazement, and quick ly shifted their position to one side of the room. The stout proprietor was busily counting the evening's receipts at one end of the bar. The solitary night-man dropped a glass he was polishing and the noise of the breaking glass caused the proprietor to look up. On beholding Washoe he opened his mouth, but forgot to speak.

Washoe advanced to the bar in a low voice demanded—

"Where is Miss Matilda?"

"Now, Washoe! Now, Washoe! That won't do," cried the proprietor. "You mustn't bother her. That's her 'greement

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with me. No one was to bother. And all the boys have been mighty careful."

"——! Where is she? Can't you answer that? You will answer that. I'm not here to bother her. I've come to find out where she is."

"You'd better be thinking of yourself. Don't you know it's bad for you to be here? Please go out before trouble starts."

"I'll go after I've found out what I came to learn," was the savage rejoinder. "If you've had any hand in making mischief for Miss Jaimson you'll pay at the muzzle of my gun. Now, where is she?"

"Curse it, man! Save your fighting blood for those who are keen to let some of it out of your carcass," cried the proprietor. "Miss Jaimson went home long ago. Wouldn't let any one go with her. Don't you know she never sings here after ten? Tonight she sang only one song and left ahead of time. Now, Washoe, I want to be your friend, but you've been in here once before tonight, and together with that crazy old coot of a Feeble Thomas, you've spoiled an evening's business——"

"To —— with you and your dirty business!" fiercely interrupted Washoe. "Miss Jaimson has not returned to her stopping-place on Taylor Street. I've just been there. Now you quit counting your money and answer my questions, or I'll show you what real trouble means for this dive—and for you, personally. Where's George?"

"So help me Gawd I don't know, Washoe!" cried the frightened proprietor. "Miss Jaimson wouldn't let him walk home with her. He left a short time after she did. He ain't here. He didn't come back."

"That's right, Washoe," spoke up a man by the wall.

"Where does George room? And be quick?" demanded Washoe, his hand resting on a gun.

"Don't, Washoe! Don't be unreasonable," groaned the proprietor. "I wouldn't have anything happen to that little lady for all the world."

"Where does George have a room?"

"Washoe, I don't know. If telling you would save my life I'd have to die. The boys say he doesn't stay more'n a night or two at a time in the same room."

"That's right," spoke up one of the group. "Spreads newspapers on the floor and sleeps with his guns in his hands."

"Last night, for the first time, he got a shake-down here," hurriedly continued the proprietor. "But he's gone. If my life was at stake I couldn't tell you where he is. If I looked for him I'd have to go it blind."

Washoe drew a deep breath and swept his eyes over the spectators; then said:

"All right. I'm going to believe you. If you've lied you'll quit selling rum. Where can I find Bill Mayfield?"

"What I said about George goes for Mayfield," was the earnest reply. "He hasn't been in here since he got back to town. Nor any of his men. I'm told he come back this morning. But if he did he ain't been near the Magnolia."

Washoe studied the fear-limned face and decided the man was telling the truth. But he was growing desperate. He had hoped to find the girl at the saloon, prolonging her program of songs. Failing in that he had assumed he would find George, or at the least, some trace of him. Disappointed in this line of his investigation he had looked to secure some clue to Mayfield's whereabouts, believing that the desperado would know where the killer was to be located. That the girl had left the saloon early in the evening and had been missing all the time he was uselessly searching for Blackburn was maddening to contemplate. He had but one more card to play.

"Where is Kell Hawkins?"

The expression of the proprietor's face changed. To fear was added hopelessness.

"Washoe, that ain't the way to help Miss Jaimson——" he began.

Washoe's eyes glittered with triumph. Smacking his hand on his belt-gun and leaning well over the bar he hissed:

"So there's one thing you do know. You're not so —— ignorant as you'd have me believe. Hawkins is in this place. Where?" The men by the wall began edging toward the street door as they caught the sound of the heavy gun being cocked. The proprietor also heard the ominous sound although the revolver was not entirely removed from the holster. He moistened his dry lips and glanced despairingly at the retreating spectators.

Washoe bruskly spoke up and warned:

"No! None of the boys will get word to him ahead of me. Some of them are my friends. All strangers will keep out of the game. I'm waiting."

With a low groan the proprietor surrendered and confessed.

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"Kell is running the faro game tonight."

"Main hall, or private room?"

Gulping spasmodically the proprietor nodded toward the door.

"Who's dealing?"

"Moses." This in a husky whisper, as the terrified man began to vision the tragedy he believed was about to be enacted.

"I'm going in there," said Washoe. "Don't want any one to follow me. Don't want any word being sent to George or Mayfield. If Hawkins doesn't know anything about the girl's disappearance I won't muss up your place."

He wheeled from the bar and quickly gained the closed door. He slipped inside the big room and closed the door after him without attracting any attention.

THE various bank games were in full swing. Those around the tables included business men, half-drunken miners, homesick tenderfeet, coast speculators out on a spree; and the management was profiting amazingly. Half a dozen women, part of the dive's equipment, glided about from group to group, encouraging the laggards to be bold of heart and try their luck once more.

It was a most incongruous scene. Half of the men were smartly dressed; the others were as they were when they came from the diggings, begrimed with dirt, hair long and ragged, beards thick and uncombed. They wore red or blue flannel shirts, ragged slouch hats, and had their coarse pants tucked into the tops of stoggy boots. But so long as they had gold and silver to squander they were as welcome, even more so, than their more carefully clothed neighbors. It was with these unshaven and unwashed that the painted women were the most successful in supplying victims for the shearer.

It was a woman who first noticed Washoe standing inside the door. With a wintry smile of welcome she made for him, only to halt suddenly and stare at him in embarrassment. Natural color vied with the paint on her face as his somber gaze met hers and recognized her. Then her strange diffidence passed, and she came on more slowly, her big black eyes blazing wildly.

"I did not know it was Señor Washoe," she murmured, peering appealingly up into the grim face. "This is bad. Much bad. Are you drunk, Señor?"

"Never more sober, Mexico. I'm here to have a little talk with Hawkins." And he started toward the faro table.

"No, no!" she begged, reaching up and pulling his hat down to his eyes so he might not be recognized. "Senor, you go away." And her face grew womanly despite the paint. "You are good. This is a bad place. Go way. Vamose!"

"None of that, Mexico. You get out to one side."

When he would have brushed her from his path she gripped his arm convulsively, and hissed:

"You must not get killed. You was sorry for me when every one say the Mexican girl mus' die. You was kinder if you had been cruel and let me die. But you did not understan'. The heart was pity. So you go. That woman is looking for you, Senor Washoe. Her head is sick. She kill."

"Where is she?"

"She come any time. Vamose!"

He thrust her aside and strode down to the gathering around the faro layout. Hawkins was sitting beside Moses, an expression of weariness on his thin face. Before him on the table was a long-barrel Colt, the house-gun, but there was none of the patrons whom he needed to intimidate. Moses, more vulture-like than ever, was entirely engrossed in running the cards from the box. Washoe had time to glance around at the players and make sure none of the Mayfield gang was present before the gambler discovered him. Beyond a sudden contraction of his heavy lids he gave no sign of any emotion. In a voice he requested—

"Some one of you down there who is not laying a bet please make room for Washoe."

Not until his partner had spoken did Moses note Washoe's presence. The hooked nose seemed to elongate as the upper lip receded for a second, and there was a flicker of an upward glance from the basilisk eyes; then his head dropped and he was devoting his attention to dealing the cards. A man vacated a chair. Washoe stood beside it and stared at Hawkins. The gambler sensed his foe's mood, and to force him into action laughingly remarked:

"Make a bet, Washoe. Unlucky in love means lucky at cards, they say." As he spoke he dropped his hand on the Colt. Thus favorably situated his nerves relaxed, and his lips twisted in triumph. He had but to make a single move to send a heavy bullet through the breast of the silent young man.

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WASHOE realized the disadvantage he had walked into. Slipping into the chair he moodily remarked:

"Yes, I'm here for play. Give me some chips." He started to thrust a hand into his coat pocket, but Hawkins warned:

"Don't. Your credit is perfectly good. Settle with the boss afterwards."

Washoe carefully counted the stacks of chips pushed across the table, and wagered fifty dollars. He lost. The next time he placed a hundred and again lost. When he deposited a hundred and fifty Hawkins laughed lightly and remarked—

"It's a good system if your roll holds out."

"I'm playing on credit," was the quiet reply.

He was a winner on the third deal, and the other players forgot about the feud between the two men to watch Washoe's method of play. Hawkins was puzzled. He knew Washoe was not there for a night of gaming, but for trouble. And yet he had permitted himself to be taken off his guard. The gambler knew he had all the advantage so long as his hand caressed the house-gun. But he did not dare kill in cold blood. If Washoe could be nagged into a show of hostility, no matter how slight, well and good.

But Washoe was disappointing him. He seemed wholly intent on the game and was giving his entire attention to placing his bets. He won and lost for some time. Those who had been watching his sytem began to decide he was playing in an eccentric manner and began to remember the bad blood between the two men. Those who knew whispered warnings to the less wise until, by degrees, Washoe had the end of the table to himself. Hawkins realized the significance of this gradual withdrawal and his eyes half-closed. Moses ran the cards out mechanically, seldom glancing up. Hawkins found the delay was wearing on his nerves. Never for a moment was Hawkins off his guard. Never did the long fingers cease to toy with the handle of the big revolver.

Washoe steadied his nerve and prepared himself to cope with the unexpected; for he had observed the sudden triumphant light shining through the contracted lids. Without shifting his gaze Hawkins reached up and touched a woman's hand resting on his shoulder. The woman understood and inclined her head. He whispered something from the side of his mouth. The woman went to one side of the room and returned with a tray containing a bottle and glass. She held the tray while Hawkins poured out a drink with his left hand.

"Liquor, Washoe?" he murmured.

Washoe, frowning over some mental problem shook his head and placed his bet. Hawkins tossed off his drink without ceasing to stare at his enemy. Washoe was not deceived by this maneuver. Hawkins had whispered too many words in simply requesting refreshments. One word would have sufficed. From the corner of his eye he watched the woman return the tray. In the same furtive fashion he observed her working her way up the hall. When she had passed out of his field of vision, unless he should turn his head, he continued to note her movements by watching the expression on Mexico's face. He saw the large black eyes, round with fear, staring after the woman. He saw the expression become poignant and observed his friend gave a little shudder and catch her lower lip between her teeth as though she had witnessed some climax. He knew the woman had passed from the hall, carrying some message from the gambler.

"Hawkins," he gently inquired as he stacked his chips, "where is Miss Jaimson?"

"Queer question to ask me," sneered Hawkins. "Once you objected because I mentioned her."

"I'm queer tonight. Where is she?"

"Better ask George."

"George isn't here. I'm asking you."

Hawkins' hand closed around the heavy gun. He believed the test had arrived. Without looking at him Washoe placed a small stack of reds and lost.

"I don't know anything about the girl," said Hawkins, watching with all his eyes for the semblance of a hostile movement.

"She disappeared this evening between the Magnolia and her boarding-place," Washoe explained in the same low voice, pushing forward a stack of blues.

"Unfortunately I'm not down in the young woman's good books. If you're curious you'd better see George."

Washoe felt his temples pound, but held himself in control as he quietly replied:

"I'd admire to. I have been looking for him."

The blue chips won. Washoe glanced up for a moment, while raking in his winnings with both hands, and said:

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"You're thick with George. Some game has been played on the little lady. I want you to tell me about it."

"This is faro," harshly retorted Hawkins, his nerve slipping a cog. "You came in here looking for a fight, and I wish to —— you'd start it!"

Washoe methodically completed separating his chips and stacking them, and with no show of anger replied:

"I told the boss I wouldn't muss up the place if you gave me a bit of information. As you say, this is faro. I'll break the bank and then we'll talk fight."

As he gathered up a stack of blues, all that his right hand could hold, he noticed Moses was stealing a look up the hall. He made to place all the chips, then seemed to change his mind, for his hand slowly drew them back. Hawkins laughed derisively at this intimation of prudence, and sneered—

"I wondered if you'd place all of them."

Washoe frowned slightly and moved his hand slowly over the board, as if undecided whether to venture them all or not. Suddenly he exclaimed—

"All, or nothing!"

And just as Hawkins and the onlookers supposed he was about to risk the double-handful the wrist came up and snapped forward, and the compact stack was dashed into the gambler's face and Washoe was on the floor beside his overturned chair by the time the gambler's gun went off and sent a bullet through the crown of the soft hat. Before the gambler could recock the weapon Washoe fired. Hawkins jerked backward, his hand retaining the gun, his thumb feebly striving to execute the order flashed to it by the now dead brain.

Washoe came to his feet and stared at the dead man. Moses sat as if petrified, his hands holding the box. Washoe, holding his gun half-raised, turned to the stunned gathering and announced:

"Miss Jaimson, the little singing-lady, has disappeared. It's believed she has been stolen. Hawkins was in the game. George is still in it. I'm after him. I know none of you will try to bother me as I leave the hall."

Retreating to the wall, so he might keep an eye on Moses, he began backing toward the exit and after a few steps collided gently with the woman called Mexico. She moved along behind him and warned:

"Hawkins sent for Senorita Fannie. To tell her to come now. You vamose quick!"

"I know, I know," he said, still watching Moses, who remained motionless in his chair and still clutching the faro-box with both hands. He was glaring at his dead partner as if he could not understand how the figure, so alert and cunning a few minutes before, was now sagging sideways in the chair, forever finished with the green table.

THE door crashed open. Washoe pivoted, with gun raised, expecting to behold Mayfield, or George. Instead he was gazing on a wild-eyed woman who was holding a heavy revolver in her two hands. Back of her were grouped the faces of the terrified proprietor and barroom loungers. The newcomer sprang into the room and turned to her left and toward the group of men cringing against the wall. It was Mexico who unwittingly cut off Washoe's line of retreat. For while the frenzied French woman was advancing down the hall, seeking her victim in the milling mass of men, and was yet unheedful of the solitary man standing against the opposite wall, Mexico screamed loudly.

"Where ees he?" cried French Fannie, halting and swinging the revolver slowly back and forth.

Moses raised a hand and pointed to Washoe, who was gliding toward the door. The French woman gained the head of the room with cat-like agility and stood between Washoe and escape. Glaring at Washoe, she shrilly cried:

"*Qui êtes vous?* You M'sieur Washoe?"

Washoe put up his gun and bowed his head.

"You keel my man?" she hysterically accused. Washoe slowly shook his head.

"I did not kill Planter," he told her. "If that dead man in the chair could talk he could tell you who did. He was one of the last men to be with Planter the night he died."

"Liar!" she shrieked. And lifting the revolver above her head with both hands, she brought it down as one would swing an ax and fired just as Mexico gave Washoe a violent push.

Washoe staggered against the wall and nearly lost his balance. The spectators yelped in horror. Washoe saw the French woman staring blankly in his direction, but was incapable of making a move to escape.

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He saw her drop the revolver and sink to her knees and shield her eyes with her arms. He was erect and feeling no hurt, although a bit dazed.

It was not until the woman hid her face that he shifted his gaze. The spectators were gaping at something behind him. He glanced about and was appalled to behold Mexico prostrate on the floor. He kneeled by her side and first glance told him the woman was dead. And very slight and girlish she looked as she rested there on the rough floor, her head cradled on one arm, with locks of her black hair falling across her painted cheek.

He rose to his feet and gave no more heed to the moaning French woman. Facing the silent group he piled gold and greenbacks on a small table and said:

"You women there, who knew this girl, and who must have known how kind-hearted she was, see that she has a decent burial. Also see if you can quiet that unfortunate, mad creature." He turned and pointed to Mexico and declared:

"Hawkins and his friends are responsible for that murder. They lied to the French woman and made her believe I killed Planter. Hawkins sent one of you women to find the French woman so she might come here and kill me. I pity the woman who took that message if she knew the full truth. I'm going now to find George. If I am lucky I shall come back and face any charge growing out of Hawkins' death."

His gaze happened to wander to the faro layout, and he was in time to see Moses disappearing into the rear room where Planter had died. He heard a window creak as it was shoved up. Instead of pursuing direct he ran from the hall and into the street and around the building. For he knew Moses was on his way to find Mayfield, or George, and tell them about Hawkins' death.

Swift of foot he reached the rear of the saloon before Moses' heavier tread had died away. The man was making for the street that ran parallel to the one Washoe had just left. It was not Washoe's plan to close in on the gambler, but to follow him to the desperado, or the killer. Over the rough ground led the chase, Moses occasionally betraying his position by falling over an upturned mound of earth where some of the first prospectors had tried their luck.

When the gambler broke into the light of the long street Washoe was compelled to hold back to avoid discovery. As Moses limped between two buildings and turned down the slope he paused to glance behind him, but Washoe, standing motionless believed he was not discovered.

He waited half a minute to give his quarry a good start and was conscious of a wild outburst on the street ahead. It did not concern him, and he gave it no thought, his mind being intent on the one purpose of trailing the gambler until he stood in the presence of George. He was walking with no appearance of haste when he passed from between two buildings and stepped into the street. Like a blow in the face came the wild howl of a mob of men as they rushed toward him. In the rear ranks he discerned the evil visage of Moses. The leader of the mob was howling:

"Hang the woman-killer! Hemp him! Washoe killed a woman! Hemp him!"

WASHOE'S wits cleared. Moses, instead of fleeing had halted to prevent any pursuit. He had known, or guessed, that Washoe was following him, and once he encountered a street crowd he had accused the young man of the Mexican woman's death. Like a flash Washoe realized his predicament. It would be a simple matter to call witnesses from the Magnolia and be absolved for Mexico's death. And in the meanwhile Moses would escape.

He whirled about and ran into the darkness and across the rough land until behind the Magnolia. The discordant cries from the mob before the saloon warned him he would find no thoroughfare there. Behind him raved and floundered the other mob. He made his way down the slope without fearing discovery until he came to a cross street. This he reconnoitered from behind some barrels between two buildings. This street had emptied itself to learn the cause of the excitement at the Magnolia. A few men, with heads bowed against the wind, were running to join the up-town gathering. Washoe swiftly ran across the street and plunged between two hovels and continued his flight. He heard no cries of disovery, but the clamor from the Magnolia followed his ears until he neared the stable.

To avoid being seen he circled a group of huts and cabins and finally reached the rear door. He stole in and made out the figure of the night hostler standing by the

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front door, pricking his ears to learn what the uproar was about. Without attracting Clancy's attention he secured the mare, examined the saddle girths and led her through the door and swung himself into the saddle.

As he was slipping his feet into the stirrups a loud voice out front began bawling—

"Is that o'nary Washoe been here this night?"

The man Clancy instantly proved his loyalty by as loudly replying:

"I ain't seen Washoe for a dog's age. What's the matter now?"

"Nothing's the matter 'cept he's just murdered a woman up-town."

"You're a —— liar!" hotly retorted the Irishman.

There followed the sound of a mêlée, and the Irishman's voice bellowing the demand—

"Do yez want some more?"

"Git into that stable and stay there, you crazy loon, or you'll be taken out and hung. This isn't any night to start any trouble. Two of you fellers pick up Rogers and dump him at the first bar. Our man didn't get down this far. Come along and travel fast."

Washoe waited until he believed the visitors had started up the hill. Then he rode the mare to the stage road, and with one hand on his hip-holster drew in his chin and sent his mount at top speed through the darkness.

CHAPTER IX

MISS MATILDA TAKES A RIDE

THE light covered wagon, with canvas drawn tightly over the end, jogged along through the night. There were no wagon-trains to share the road. Occasionally a small group of miners, foot-sore or drunken, would bawl out from the side of the road and request a ride. These were returning from a visit to the hill town. But the occupants of the wagon preferred to risk a playful bullet to being accommodating.

The driver repeatedly craned his neck, and at last his companion said—

"You can't see anything in this darkness, Bill."

"Naw. But I might hear something. Town seems quiet 'nough."

"She won't be missed before morning. Long before then we ought to have her snugly hidden, if the place is as good as you say."

"Once we git there the devil hisself can't find us. Many the time I've hid up there. It's in a high valley 'bout ten miles south-east of Dayton. We'll swing off the stage road before we git to Dayton. The place is all by itself, yet close 'nough to grub an' licker."

"The boys will be waiting for us and will have things ready?"

"They're there now. They know who's boss. If they ever had any doubt then Jayhawker's death told 'em. Don't ye worry about this end of the game, George. Everything will go mighty slick on my side of the table. Ye just rustle an' put through yer end of the game. Then we'll both be in bonanza."

"And Hawkins. Divides up three ways," mused George.

"Can ye trust him, George?"

"I don't trust any one very far," was the ominous response. "If Hawkins believed he could trick me and not meet me again he'd do it in a minute. He's got the heart to stack the cards, but in my case he lacks the nerve. I didn't take to his plan of blaming Planter's death on Washoe. It turns out to be a good idea, as it keeps the young man busy dodging the woman. But it showed me that Hawkins lacks nerve."

Mayfield, comfortably drunk and entirely forgetful of George's treatment of him in the Magnolia bar, boasted:

"I wasn't backing away from doing for Planter. It was Hawkins who would have it the other way. George, I'm skeery of Kell 'less I've got him face to face where I can watch him. He's a deep cuss in a snaky way. See how quick he was to plaster the Planter killing on young Washoe! If we could be hid in the Magnolia tonight and could keep cases on him we'd find he's already a-stewin' and a-plannin' to rake in the whole pot in this game."

"He may have his notions, but he lacks nerve to try it on *me*," assured the killer.

"He don't care for you an' he don't care for me. Ye see, George, the crowd he runs with ain't like my crowd at all. When we git together his men keep to one side of the room, their store-clothes all spick and clean, their shirts b'iled an' white. My boys take to t'other side of the room, rough an' ready, but with hearts like mountain lions.

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My boys feel it mighty keen to be sort o' looked down on. More'n once they'd git to drawin' blood if I didn't hold 'em back. So, I say for ye to keep yer peepers on Kell Hawkins. Already he's thinking that Gentle George is a marked man, an' he's figgerin' that ye'll have to jump the territory, or stretch hemp. Then he 'lows to step in an' grab all the stakes."

"I may have to leave the territory," slowly admitted George, remembering his flight from California in Fifty-six. "But before I do all accounts will be settled. And as for 'stretching hemp,' my kind don't die that way."

"Of course they don't, George! Ain't I seen 'nough of the stout-hearted boys peg out by gun an' knife, but not by rope, to know that?"

"You're cursedly encouraging," muttered the killer.

"I didn't mean nothing pers'nal, George," hastily assured Mayfield. "But if a man's a fightin' man he must look for a fightin' finish."

For several minutes the killer was silent. Mayfield, illiterate and vicious, had spoken the thought George had endeavored to oust from his mind ever since he was compelled to flee from California. The night air was crisp, but it was not that that caused him to pull a blanket closer over his shoulders. He was suddenly wondering how it would feel to be mortally wounded by a bullet. It was more easy to understand pain from a knife-thrust. He had seen men die and had slain a respectable number. Early in his career, when he flushed with pride over each new notch, he had hoped his fame would rival that of Dragoon Jackson, the old Texas bad-man, whose expertness with two guns had passed into the legendary stage.

Now that the passing years and the habit of reflection were compelling him to question the future he was forced to agree with Mayfield that a fighting man at the best could only hope to die fighting. The killer did not relish contemplating his last exit. Much of the time he could keep away from the disturbing thoughts, just as normal men can avoid meditating on death. It had bothered him none to see his victims topple over, all their interests and activities ended; nor had he spent any time in diagnosing their last sensations. He found it was bothering him now, however, when driven to imagine the effect of a ball of lead blasting a hole through his own well-kept body. The contempt in which he had held his companion lessened as he was forced to admit that Mayfield was something of a philosopher. From his brooding silence came a new conviction—a killer should be a fatalist. Yet he resented the ruffian's dictum that a bad-man *must* meet a violent end.

He remarked—

"There's more than one fighting man who quits the fighting game and lives out his years in a hum-drum way."

Mayfield chuckled, and retorted:

"A fightin' man may think he can do it, but look 'em up. In the first place ye can't say that a single gunman has quit his fightin' ways for good till he dies in bed with his boots off. So long as he lives there's always the chance he'll git het up over something and remember his old tricks an' go for a gun. Take any of the old-timers who was, or is, handy with gun or knife. How long would Dragoon Jackson, Bill Hickman, yerself, or me, keep lamb-like if some cuss come up and slapped us in the face, just as the boys say ye slapped old Thomas' face? Nary a one. Might be wearing a empty belt, but the hand would dig for hip or boot just the same, just from habit. Then t'other feller gits in his work. Boot Hill for the man with the empty belt."

"A man could go back east where folks don't wear guns."

"Then he'd have to go mighty far back. But sayin' he did—how's he goin' to live? How would ye live, George? Work in a store? Work on a farm? Got to live, you know. No 'stove-pipes' an' a pocket full of gold pieces at any work you could do. How much money ye *earned* even out here, where ye know th' ways of th' country? Would ye be willin' to bark yer hands up an' go without store-clothes? Could ye git over th' habit of havin' folks stand 'round out th' way an' bark when ye spoke? Could ye stand it to have a man slap yer face——"

"Enough of fool questions! Any one who can get me is welcome to my scalp," fiercely broke in George. "There are some lights ahead."

"Yep; that's Dayton. We'll quit th' road before we git to it an' hit for th' high valley. Don't s'pose ye want to stop outside th' town an' sneak in for a drink?"

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"No, sir! No drinking on this trip. You've had enough to last you till we get back, which will be tomorrow morning. Then you'd better go light. One of your men killed himself by drinking too much."

"Meanin' Jayhawker," growled Mayfield. "The best man I had if licker hadn't always made him want to blat things. When we was resting up we used to give him a big jug an' let him soak. When we had a job he knew he was to keep away from it. When he didn't come right back to Gold Hill that night I feared something was wrong. He was weak-kneed when it come to the bottle. If he'd got his man, 'stead of missin', he'd come back to us an' would be alive tonight.

"But Jayhawker an' me is different. Drink don't bother me. S'long as I live I'll drink. When I can't drink I don't hanker to go on livin'. I'm half-drunk now, but I've got my head with me. Yes, sir! But we'll pass up the town as someone might know us an' remember seein' us. But when I git back to Virginy I'll fill up my hide an' not do any more fool talkin' then you'll do on cold water."

"All right. Be your own boss. But remember that any man in this game who drinks and babbles gets the same from me that Jayhawker got from you," quietly warned the killer.

DAYTON, one of the oldest towns in Nevada and situated at the mouth of Gold Cañon, which leads to the Comstock mines, was bustling with evening activities when the covered wagon halted a quarter of a mile from its outskirts for Mayfield to dismount and cast about the roadside to locate the spot where he proposed to turn off. His mood was vicious because of George's inhibition against a stealthy visit to the town for whisky.

"Haven't lost yourself?" asked George as Mayfield climbed into the wagon.

"If ye never lose yerself worse'n I'm lost tonight no one ever will go huntin' ye up," was the sullen response. Then in an undertone: "Talk when I'm drunk! More chance of me talkin' when I'm dead."

He picked up the reins and was about to make the turn, impatient to leave the lights and temptation behind him when an organ-grinder, wearily tramping to Virginia City just as he had tramped over the Sierras, stepped up to the wheel and in broken English asked how far it was to the hill town. Mayfield lifted a foot and kicked the man in the face and sent him and his organ flat in the dirt.

"Them —— furriners didn't oughter be let into a white man's country," he remarked as he tooled his team down to a ford of the Carson.

"Foreigners sometimes carry guns," murmured George. "If he'd seen your face you might have found that he had a long memory."

Mayfield swore for a minute in a vain attempt to evidence how cheaply he held all "furriners." His outburst was stilled as the wagon drew up the eastern bank and there came a thudding sound from behind him.

"Kickin' her little heels to keep 'em warm," he chuckled, giving the horses the lash and sending them at a perilous clip through the darkness.

"Slow down! You're jolting the life out of her," ordered George. "You'll be losing a wheel. If we wreck the wagon the game is up. It'll be found in the morning and give the whole thing away."

Mayfield allowed the horses to take a more reasonable gait, but the banging of the prisoner's heels continued. George softly warned:

"Now she has come to her senses we must be careful of our talk. What she hears she'll remember and tell."

"If there's any chance of her tellin' things on me she won't be 'lowed to remember," grunted Mayfield.

"There won't be any chance if you keep your mouth shut. Maybe that gag's too tight. No money in choking her to death. Drive slow while I climb back and see how she is."

He clambered over the back of the seat and located the girl on her couch of blankets. He examined the store of supplies roped at the end of the wagon and made sure none of them had broken loose and had fallen on her. Then he examined the cords holding the gag in place.

"Is the gag too tight?", The heels emphatically pounded the bottom of the wagon.

"If you'll promise not to cry out I'll remove it. Kick once if you promise."

The heels remained quiet.

"So that's it, eh?" mumbled the killer. "Still on your high-horse, eh? Well, there's

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a ten-mile ride ahead of you, and if you can stand it, I can. But we'll take no chance of your making a noise. Give a kick if you'll keep your mouth shut." The heels gave no response.

"Stuffy piece of baggage," George growled as he returned to the seat.

Mayfield laughed sardonically and prophesied—

"She'll soon git over that."

"Look here, Mayfield. Here's something you must understand thoroughly right now. Neither you, nor any of your men are to bat an eye at her. She's to be offered no incivilities. Mark that."

"If ye treat her as well as I aim to she won't have no kick comin'," growled Mayfield. "Th' boys usually do as I tell 'em. An' it's sort of raspin' to be forever hearin' what's goin' to happen to me if I don't do just so."

"I simply want it thoroughly understood," murmured George. "Then no one can say he didn't understand. This is a bit out of my line and I've gone into it to make a stake. Once that's done the young woman's to go to her father unharmed."

"Never knew a game yet that paid when there was a woman mixed up in it," was the skeptical reply.

"You're in a bad temper. This will pay—pay rich—if no one kicks over the traces."

The bright starlight vaguely illumined the rough and broken country ahead. Only by giving the horses their heads and allowing them to find the trail did the occupants of the wagon escape severe bumps and jolts. After a wheel had hit an outcropping of ledge and had thrown Mayfield into a fit of profanity George became alarmed at hearing a strangled cough from the girl. Calling on the desperado to slow down he gained her side and found her writhing and twisting convulsively. Despite the darkness he soon had the gag out and by the way she fought for breath he knew she had nearly choked to death. He rearranged the blankets over her, added an extra one for warmth and warned:

"Make any noise and it'll go back, tighter than ever. You might as well understand that no one can hear you even if you yell your head off. We're miles from any town. Will you give your promise to keep quiet?"

She could not speak aloud, but he bent over her and caught the whispered, defiant—

"No."

Angry at her stubbornness he shortly replied:

"All right. I'll leave it out just the same. Make a sound and it goes back in, but Mayfield is the one who'll arrange it next time."

She said nothing. He placed a hand on her arm and discovered she was shivering. He smiled. She feared the desperado more than she did him. Had a man been in her place the killer's pride would have been hurt. As it was he felt complimented. Despite his fierce trade she had recognized him to be a gentleman, he told himself. Whereas she was merely crediting him with having more intelligence than his companion, and was fearing the beast in Mayfield more than she feared the homicidal devil in George.

Miss Matilda was unable to speak aloud when the killer left her. To be free of the terrible gag was luxurious, and she worked her jaws to exercise the strained muscles and gave no time to thinking of escape so anxious was she to fill her lungs. She had been caught up in the darkness of Taylor Street when within a few rods of her boarding-place. Before she could cry out her head was muffled in a blanket and she had been thrown into the bottom of the waiting wagon. Held helpless and half suffocated she had been driven quickly to a hovel on the lower edge of the town. Then she had been blindfolded and gagged and taken inside. Not until Gentle George arrived at the hut was she returned to the wagon and the journey resumed.

Just before starting George had pressed a cloth over her nose and mouth and she had been conscious of a sickly, sweetish scent. But she had recovered her senses long before either of her abductors suspected that fact. Although reclining on a pile of blankets to lessen the jar of the rough vehicle she had been subjected to much physical torment. Mentally she was beyond all sense of fear, and was, as she would have expressed it, "fighting mad."

To accentuate her sense of injury was the knowledge she had treated Washoe unjustly. As in the jolting darkness she began to put together fragments of conversation from the front seat, and finally understood how she had been duped and how unjustly she had condemned the young speculator she was in danger of betraying her waking

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state by bursting into tears and possible choking to death.

She was astounded at George's perfidy as revealed by his and Mayfield's talk. No one had talked to her about George except as Washoe had attempted to tell her something. Her small face burned with shame as she recalled how she had refused to listen. The young man had intended only goodness to her and George of the punctilious manners had plotted only evil. Two desires burned in her heart—to escape and tell Washoe she was sorry; to escape and bring vengeance down on the two men ahead. She had always mistrusted Hawkins and would have none of his civilities. But George and Washoe she had read wrong.

There were a few weak moments when she wanted her father, but she made herself stronger by gloating on what he would do when he learned of the indignities heaped upon her. Now that the gag was removed she was no longer afraid. She believed George would hold the rougher villains in control, and it was Mayfield she feared the most.

THE wagon began climbing the long gradual slope of the elevated valley. The central floor of the valley was quite clear of bowlders and the wagon moved more swiftly, as Mayfield cracked the whip and announced:

"Most there, thank God! I'm that dry for a little drink that alkali dust would taste wet. In a minute we'll see the light if the boys ain't got tired an' turned in."

Soon the wagon rattled around a bend. A light, twinkling ahead, announced the end of the journey. Mayfield began—

"We oughter be gittin' some word from——"

"Shut up!" roughly interrupted George. In a whisper he continued: "No sense in telling everything. Word will come as soon as it's found out she's gone. If he's smart as he pretends to be there won't be any talk. Once the Magnolia man believes she's gone back to Carson City every one will believe it."

"That oughter be easy."

"Our friends won't run any risk of being mixed up in it," whispered George. "He looks ahead to protect number one. He hasn't budged from town. There's nothing against him. I had to write the note and sign her name to it. He was afraid his own writing might some time turn up and trip him. I'll gamble he won't give the note to the Magnolia man. He'll hire some one to act messenger. In other words he won't appear in this at all. But you and I are out of town. We may have to explain our absence. Not him!"

"—— him for a slippery cuss!" grunted Mayfield. "We oughter made him come along."

"No. I don't trust him. The girl's not to be harmed."

The killer forgot his caution in saying the last, and Miss Matilda's voice faintly but promptly, called out:

"Don't you worry about that, Mister George the Snake. The worst you can do to me is to kill me. No Jaimson woman yet ever had call to be scared of skunks."

Mayfield's eyes grew lurid. To George he whispered: "Th' boys take orders from me. But she don't want to sling any talk like that to them, or they might forgit."

"I'll kill the man who forgets. I'll shoot him to pieces and it'll be the last bullet that puts out his light," softly promised the killer.

"'Stead of makin' war talk to me ye'd better caution her to keep her trap shet," mumbled Mayfield.

The horses knew the journey was ended, and at a smashing gallop drew up before the double log house, two separate structures with an open shed formed by the connecting roof. The door of a cabin was thrown open and two men, each armed with a rifle, stood revealed against the candle-light. One of them hoarsely inquired—

"You, Boss?"

"Who'd ye think it was? Gov'ner Nye?" growled Mayfield as he climbed down from the seat. "Fire built an' bed ready in t'other shack as I ordered?"

"Smart fire burnin'. Dry grass to sleep on."

"Kirk, take the wagon out back an' put the nags in the hovel. Ben, ye lend a hand here in luggin' in the grub an' blankets. George'n me will sack in Her High Mightiness."

"Don't take any bother, Mayfield," spoke up the killer. "I'll attend to escorting Miss Jaimson to her cabin. The new blankets are for her."

"You point the way, Mister George the

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Snake, and keep clear of me," shrilly warned the girl. "Cut these ropes and I'll manage for myself."

"She don't seem to have no fav'rites among us," remarked Mayfield with an evil grin.

George stroked his long mustache in grim silence while the end of the wagon was being cleared of supplies. Then he crawled inside and liberated the girl. She refused his offer of assistance and swung herself out of the wagon, and would have fallen had she not clung to the tail-board until circulation was restored. The mop of golden curls was disheveled, and the little Spanish jacket was sadly rumpled, but the gray eyes flared with scorn as she stared at the four ruffians.

Two centuries of pioneer womanhood were behind her, and the inherited self-dependence of those resolute mothers would not permit her to give way to fear. One of the men gathered up the new blankets and carried them to her cabin, and after satisfying herself she could walk she hobbled after him. In returning he met her and held out his arms to assist her as her slight form swayed and appeared to be at the point of collapse. The backhanded slap she administered across the man's face resounded through the still night, and she completed the remaining distance with firm steps. The fellow caressed his face and muttered evil things under his breath. George smiled sardonically.

"Quite a little spit-fire," he remarked to Mayfield.

"Better for her if she was more quiet-like," muttered the desperado.

"Better the man had never been born who tries to break her spirit," gently warned George.

It was the tone of voice that marked his homicidal frame of mind and had gained him his nickname. It subdued Mayfield more quickly than any bluster or rough threats.

WITH head held high Miss Matilda passed under the connecting roof and into the small cabin. The room was lighted by a fire crackling in the mud and stone fireplace. The new blankets had been thrown on a quantity of dry grass heaped at one side of the room. There was one window, very small and lacking glass. It was set high and scarcely large enough to permit the passage of the prisoner's slight body, but as an additional precaution there was a section of a thoroughbrace nailed across it on the outside. A box served as a table and there was one chair fashioned from a barrel. There were no other furnishings.

Miss Matilda stood in the middle of the forlorn place and glanced about her. Her lips began to tremble, but she promptly bit them until she had conquered this outward sign of weakness. The window was set high and she did not believe she could wriggle through it even if there had not been any stout leather thong dividing it. George came in and deposited more blankets on the couch.

The girl swung about and stared at him steadily. He waited for her to speak and endeavored to look sympathetic. Her silence grated on him and at last he began—

"This may all seem unreasonable to you, Miss——"

"This my room?" she fiercely broke in.

"It is. I have told Mayfield I will kill the man who enters it."

"Get out! Shoot yourself outside. You've entered it. Get out!"

George had his pride. He was vain. He relished the attention he attracted when he swung along the streets. It was only after something of a struggle that he had admitted the wisdom of leaving his tall hat behind and wearing a soft hat during this adventure. He was accustomed to be treated with exaggerated politeness. He had had little to do with women, for observation had taught him that women had brought about the downfall of many a "bad" man. Self-preservation had demanded he eschew women and whisky as prohibitive weaknesses for those who live by the gun. He could not remember a time since entering upon his vicious career when any one, knowing him to be Gentle George, had looked on him with contempt.

"I'm standing between you and harm," he gritted. "That's no way to talk to me. I'm a few cards above the like of those men outside."

"Get out, you cotton-mouthed moccasin," she calmly commanded. "When Pap Jaimson gets within clawing distance of you, you'll most mortally need some one to stand between you and some desperate injuries. You won't get a chance to use no gun. You'll fight Wolf Knob style.

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In a euchre deck you wouldn't be more'n a two-spot. Get out!"

He clamped his lips tightly and wheeled and withdrew. Barring the door he entered the other cabin, his heart seething with rage and his eyes seeking something to vent it upon. But Mayfield quickly read his mood and took pains to make no reference to the girl, and with a side glance warned his henchmen to practise a similar caution. The two men had prepared bacon and beans, and coffee before the wagon arrived. George curtly ordered Kirk to take food and drink to the door of the cabin. The second man was to accompany him to prevent the prisoner from bolting away in the darkness.

"To the door, mark you. That's as far as you two will go. After she's taken the food you'll be careful in barring the door. Before I leave I'll give you the rest of your orders."

"George, I'm able to boss my own men," reminded Mayfield, driven to assert himself by fear of having a shadow cast over his leadership.

"That'll do. There are certain orders they will take from me, and sorry the price if those orders aren't carried out to the letter."

Mayfield's rebellion vanished. He felt the same weakness in the pit of the stomach as when the killer invited him to leave the Magnolia bar. With a shrug of his shoulders he essayed an air of indifference and remarked:

"Order the liver out of 'em for all I care. I was only reckonin' to save you the trouble."

"You'll find it's no trouble for me to give orders and see that I'm obeyed."

"——! What's the good of rowin'? Let's drop it an' eat. Where's the jug?"

Kirk paused in dishing out beans and bacon for the prisoner and pointed to the corner. George inquired—

"Only one jug?"

"That's what I say," growled Mayfield. "Only one measly jug, and we will be cooped up here all night! An' them two scuts have been at it a'ready! If I'd know'd that I could 'a' sneaked into Dayton an' got another. But the way you talked, George, I reckoned——"

"You reckoned right," interrupted George. "You'll do your drinking in town. We'll be back tomorrow. The men left on guard here will do no drinking. This is a big game and a dangerous one. I won't have it spoiled by a drunken man."

And with bewildering swiftness his revolver was in his hand and spitting a bullet through the jug.

As the jug collapsed and the whisky spilled the three men glared at him murderously; but as his dull, pale eyes switched from face to face rage gave way for fear. With a sickly smile Mayfield admitted:

"Reckon it's best this time, fellers, to go it dry. Won't be long 'fore we can have a snoot full. An' this is a most pertic'lar an' ticklish job."

Fearing the shot had alarmed the girl George went outside and halted under the small window of the prisoner's cabin and softly called out:

"There's no trouble. The pistol shot was to smash a jug of whisky."

"I'm sorry," answered the girl. "I was hoping you folks was killing each other off."

George tugged viciously at his blond mustache and strode back to his associates. The moment he entered the door he knew they had been discussing him, which meant cursing him; for as he entered they fell silent and refrained from looking at him. He stared at them thoughtfully as he weighed the possibility of an open mutiny. He decided they would dare attempt nothing because of the girl. They were depending upon him to put the game through. After it was all finished then it would be well never to show his back to one of the gang.

"I'm going to take a bit of sleep," he announced. "You wouldn't call it sleep as the least noise wakes me up."

With this veiled warning he drew off his boots and removed his coat and carefully folded it. There were two bunks, one near the door and one near the fireplace. Across from the latter was a shake-down of dry grass and blankets. George selected the bunk near the door as being farthest removed from the light of the fireplace, and the trio did not fail to notice that the killer was taking his two heavy guns to bed with him. Mayfield took the other bunk and the two men threw themselves on the bed of grass.

The fire died down to coals, and heavy breathing and snores filled the room. Whenever one of the sleepers moved George's head came up. He slept, as he

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had said, very close to the surface, with something in his head always on the alert to arouse him. Along toward morning he was dozing lightly. Mayfield, yearning for a drink, was wide awake. Yet it was George who took alarm and lifted his head, and softly called out—

"Are you awake, any of you?"

"I be," growled Mayfield. "An' dryer'n——"

"Don't you hear it?"

Mayfield swung his feet to the floor and bowed his shaggy head. "I don't hear nothin' but the —— wind."

"Some one comes at a gallop!"

"Then you got Injun ears. I don't hear nothin'," growled Mayfield. He rose and went to the door and threw it open. At first he believed his companion had been deceived; then he caught the sound of swiftly approaching hoofs. He drew back and secured a gun hanging in its holster from a peg. George slipped from his bunk and whispered—

"It's only one man."

"At this time of mornin', an' needin' snort of licker, I can eat a dozen," savagely snarled Mayfield, holding the door slightly ajar and thrusting out the long barrel of his belt gun.

"No place beyond here he could be making for?"

"Naw. He's comin' here. —— of a time to be comin' here. If he's one of our men he oughter come hours ago or else not come till 'bout sunrise. Nothin' new can 'a' busted loose in Virginy durin' the night."

"We'll meet him outside. Wake the men so they won't do any shooting while half-asleep."

KIRK and Ben were aroused and the four stepped outdoors, George taking time to pull on his boots. The horseman was a short distance down the valley, and the light was sufficient to make out objects, especially if they were in motion, as far as the bend. A dark blotch rounded the turn and the racket of the pounding hoofs came with staccato definiteness, with sparks springing up when shod hoof struck rock. The rider violently reined in before the cabin and tersely called out:

"Inside there! Wake up! —— to pay!"

"Think you're waking the dead?" sharply rebuked George, gliding forward. "Who are you? Quick!"

"Moses," snapped back the rider, beginning to slide down from his horse.

Mayfield ran forward and peered into the man's face.

"I'd know that nose if I was plumb blind. Something's happened? You've fetched word from Hawkins?"

"Hawkins is dead!" exploded Moses.

"Dead?" repeated George, as if not understanding.

"Young Washoe killed him. Washoe came into the faro game. Pretended he wanted to break the bank. Spoiled a fine run of luck by plugging Kell."

"What happened to Washoe?" George grimly demanded.

"Don't know. Probably dead by this time. He chased me out the Magnolia. I set a street crowd on to him by saying he'd just killed a woman. Before Hawkins was shot he sent for French Fannie to come and finish Washoe. By the time she got there Hawkins was dead. Woman tried to pot Washoe and killed a dance-hall girl called 'Mexico.' So I legged it and told every one I met that Washoe had killed the girl. Crowd was crazy. Right on his heels when I lit out. If they didn't cool off enough to take time and ask questions at the Magnolia he's stretching hemp by this time."

Mayfield and his men were dumfounded. George bitterly said:

"You're not very sure of anything except that Hawkins is dead. Dead sure of that?"

"I was sitting beside him when he was plugged. You can play it with a copper that Kell's cashed in. Almost sure Washoe has been sent after him. No doubt but what the crowd caught him."

"Makes it rather bad for you whether the crowd hung him or let him go," remarked George. "If he's dead the town knows the truth by this time and will be anxious to get you. If he's alive he'll spare the town the trouble by hunting for you alone."

"I didn't wait around any once I could get a horse," grumbled Moses. "I knew you ought to know that Kell's cashed in."

"But what were you doing when Hawkins was shot? Why did you let him chase you from the hall? Why didn't you take a hand in the shooting? Didn't you have your gun on?" crisply cross-examined the killer.

But Moses was not to be nonplused.

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"Not for me, thank you," he calmly retorted. "Hawkins had a gun on the table when Washoe came up and set in the game. Hawkins just the same as had the drop on Washoe all the time. And at that the cub fooled him slick. Hawkins even got the first shot and only spoiled the boy's hat. I wasn't taking any cards. Zip! bang! All over. When I draw on that young devil it'll be when he's standing with his back to me and doesn't know I'm anywhere near."

"You're a cur!" grated George, throbbing with rage to know Washoe had gone against odds and had won out.

"All the time," quietly agreed Moses. "But I'm alive. You'll remember, George, I wasn't to do any dealing in this new game; just to act as look-out. Nothing else, thank you. And I'm cold and need a drink."

"No drinks here," informed Mayfield. "George won't have any licker here. But we can freshen up the fire, and there's a bucket of water inside. Kirk, take care of his hoss. Ben, rassle out some beans an' heat 'em up."

The men entered the cabin, and food was served. After Moses had fortified himself he retold his story, commencing at the beginning and filling in all the details. When he had finished George for the second time cross-examined him. "It's plain Washoe got away. Wasn't even caught," he exclaimed in disgust.

"I'll gamble he didn't," stoutly offered Moses. "When I left to get a horse they just the same as had him cornered. If he showed any fight they surely riddled him. Anyway, Kell's dead, and the town's talking about the girl being missing. Washoe was the one who blew the game. He went to her lodging-place before coming to find Hawkins. Before he and Hawkins swapped shots he told every one in the room how he had been looking for you, George, and you, Bill. Said he would find the two of you and make you tell about the girl. He asked Hawkins to tell where she was, promising not to make any fuss if he told. Hawkins laughed at him and told him to ask you——"

"The fool! To bring my name into it," snarled George. "I told you, Mayfield, that Hawkins would stand from under at the first whiff of danger."

"Well, he's dead. He didn't get from under," Moses philosophically reminded. "And it won't be healthy for me to go back there for a while."

"Perhaps you'll have nerve enough to stay here and help watch the girl," sneered George. Then to Mayfield:

"Only way to use him, Bill. He can help your men stand guard."

Mayfield stared moodily at the fire. Despite his criticism of Hawkins he had understood the dead man much better than he ever could understand George. Hawkins could be comprehended by his vices. He had come in contact with Mayfield in the three major weaknesses, gambling, whisky, and women. George was of a distinct species. He was never companionable and always was dangerous. He was more machine than man. Mayfield complained:

"Our game is all mixed up. Without Hawkins to see the gal's old man and fix the price for gittin' her back things don't look so good to me as they did."

"We're better off without Hawkins," fiercely contradicted George. "I only wish he'd taken that meddling young fool along with him. I never trusted Hawkins. I always felt that he'd grab the pot and ride to Texas and leave us holding the bag. I had to take him in as at that time I didn't know you well enough, Bill. I'll do the talking in place of Hawkins. No one is afraid that I'll ride off with the pot?"

"Oh, we know ye're square, George," cried Mayfield with a false enthusiasm. "But with the town torn out about the gal being gone, and with that —— Washoe prob'ly tryin' to trail us this minute, things don't look good. First time I ever went into a game where there was a woman to handle. I don't like the looks of things."

"All right. You've had your say. Perhaps you're speaking for these other men. Let's understand each other perfectly. You fellows are free to draw out, and there won't be any trouble. I don't want any weak-kneed fellows with me. I'll take the girl and ride off and get the money and you fellows can go back to Virginia and suck your thumbs and think how glad you are to have missed making a fortune."

The prospect of a rich haul overturned Mayfield's pessimism. As a defense he groaned!

"It's the need of my mornin' drink that makes everything look so black. Give me five fingers of red-eye an' I'll laugh in the —— face. Then ag'in, I'm sore that Mose

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didn't stick round town longer an' make sure what was happenin' to Washoe."

"He should have done that," readily agreed George. "As it is we only know half of what has happened."

"No, thanks," tersely spoke up Moses, his nose coming down and his upper lip receding. "I know when it's time to slide out." He paused and lighted a cigar and continued. "Fine business me sticking around! They'd taken the two of us to the Magnolia, and he'd been set free. Then they might have stretched me. If they didn't, he'd have been on my trail. If I hadn't set the mob on to him he'd have had me inside of fifteen minutes. And you'd been hitched out here and not knowing anything that had happened. After seeing what he did to Kell, with Kell holding all the cards, I wasn't hankering for trouble. I just pushed back my plate and said, 'No more, thank you.'"

George pondered over the situation for some minutes. Finally he said:

"We may decide it's best to move the girl from this place. So long as we hold her no one is going to bother us. The time for us to look out is after she's been rescued, or returned to her father. I'll do the talking and see if the old man won't want to sell us his claim—at our price. After the sale is recorded they'll probably leave the country. Washoe, too, may decide to take a long journey. The territory hasn't time to look people up. The whole thing will be forgotten. We'll work out the details later. The game looks better to me than it ever did."

"To turn the gal an' the old man loose to blat all over Nevada how he was forced to sell out would be a fool play," mumbled Mayfield, his eyes glowing wolfishly. "That would upset the sale and send us to cover—if we was lucky 'nough to git away."

George smiled in a peculiar manner, and reminded:

"I spoke of the two leaving the country. I think Moses caught the idea."

The gambler nodded, his heavy lidded eyes closed to slits.

"That would be the only sensible way," he agreed. "I'd say no if it was only an ordinary pot. But for a rich silver ledge—go the limit; only be careful and don't make a move when any one is looking."

Mayfield's red eyes lighted with clearer understanding. "Now ye're talkin' hoss sense," he approved. "Now I begin to see some daylight."

"But let there be no mistake," warned George. "So long as we hold the young woman she's to be treated right. Let you men who remain on guard remember that." And he directed his feral stare at Moses, Kirk, and Ben in turn until each man averted his gaze.

"You don't have to threaten me, George," spoke up Moses. "Women never interest me. I've entered this game and I'll take cards. But what we should have done was, to remove the old man, forge a bill of sale and leave the girl alone. We've gone at it the hardest way, but we can't back out."

Ben and Kirk went back to their beds. The others sat before the fire and discussed the situation from every angle until sunrise. As a result of this talk George found himself changing his estimate of the gambler. While never to be depended upon in a fight he possessed a much higher intelligence than either Mayfield or Hawkins possessed. It pricked the killer's pride somewhat to admit further to himself that Moses was more cunning and subtle than he.

George excused himself to himself by remembering that he was a gun-fighter, and not a plotter; yet he wished he had become more intimately acquainted with Moses' mental qualities before embarking upon the kidnaping scheme. When he and Mayfield were ready to depart for Virginia City he was convinced that Moses was his most valuable man. He excluded him from the final, forcefully expressed orders to the guards. Ben and Kirk heard him in sullen silence, and then brought up the saddle horses. George delayed long enough to speak to the girl. When he rapped on her door he was promptly commanded to "get out."

TO BE CONTINUED

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SEA WOLF

by
F ST MARS

Author of "Amigo del Christiano," "*Arms and the Beetle*," *etc.*

"Where there's frost and there's snow
And the stormy winds do blow,
And the daylight's never done,
Brave Boys."
—CHANTY.

THERE is something in a name; even in the wild there is something; even on the pitiless breast of the open sea there is something. It takes something to make a name, more to keep one.

Orca had made a name, and so had his father before him. He seemed to consider it incumbent upon him to do his best to keep it.

Officially he was registered as Orca gladiator, which showed that he was not just any ordinary beast. Unofficially men called him the killer, which proved it. He was also known as the grampus. By any name he was a scourge, no less. As if the sea, already having so many, needed another.

And of all the scourges of all the seas, he was perhaps the greatest. Also all the seas were his home. He had no address, other than just—the sea. And God knew whither, during his life upon and under the seas, he had traveled.

Also Heaven alone knew how long that life had lasted, so that even now no one can tell whether he was a very old young beast or a young old one. Certainly he was a leader even among killers, a master slayer of slayers. Also he was a very big beast—as land dwellers, not the sea folk, count size—a good twenty-eight feet long; and he weighed many tons; but there were reasons why one could not either exactly weigh or precisely measure him, thirteen reasons in each of his jaws, and over an inch, many of them, in diameter—teeth!

Size, however, counts for less in the wild than in civilization. It is the amount of devil that backs the size that counts. Orca was all devil—merciless as the sea, cold as the ice-floe, ferocious as the tiger, cruel as Fate, ravenous as the wolf-pack—all the pack in his own person.

In the midst of murder and sudden death had he been born, nurtured and reared in the sea; all his life he had been taught, and had believed, that he was master and king of it. And the very sea, that from the first minute was his cradle—and in the last would be his grave—had backed him up in it. "Attempt the end and never swim in doubt" seemed to be his motto; and he followed that same, so that it was his boast that no living thing that swam was too big or too terrible for him to tackle, and that he, he alone and only, was king of the ocean and master of his fate.

With that belief, his size, weight, strength, armament, the hunger of several ordinary animals, arrogant courage, and, above all, great swiftness, a beast may go a long way. Orca had indeed done so already—several thousands of miles.

A plum-colored back—an island, one might have thought—arose and uprose upon the jade-green waters that creamed and careened around it in white frills, and blew an oily blast of steamy vapor up into the air ten feet nearly straight; and Orca, as represented by a six-foot, jet-black back-fin, sharp as a knife-blade and nearly as straight, swerved in the rolling swell to see the wonderful sight.

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The plum-colored back and oily blast was a whale, a hump-back whale, and only not a monster because of a monster race. And Orca, who had led his little cohort of gladiators up the Gulf Stream—even all the way from south of North America had he led them—became at once interested, for he had not seen a whale for quite some time. Also he was, as ever, hungry—hunger, by the way, being with him not a natural phenomenon merely, but an obsession, a mania, almost a disease.

Now it may be thought that a whale of fifty feet and fifty tons, and hunger would suggest little relationship in the eyes of any beast, even of Orca, but those who think that show that they do not know this dashing killer.

The tall—much taller and straighter than a shark's—back-fin swerved and headed whaleward. That was all to be seen of Orca up to the present, all that most people ever see of him. And his cohort of gladiators did likewise.

The whale blew for a few seconds, then went under—she was forging ahead at about two knots all the time—and rose, and blew again. She would do this for quite a long time before she got her lungs, her wonderful lungs, quite empty and quite full again. Then she would go down for keeps, and stay down for any time, perhaps almost an hour.

Orca knew this. It was part of his job to know. And he knew that his best time to break his neutrality was now.

But he knew something else. Another form had appeared beside the whale, small only in comparison to her vastness, but three times the bulk of any of the killers, except Orca perhaps. That was the whale's little baby, and one reason why she should not dive too deep nor keep down too long.

Then Orca and his cohort declared war. As the wolf-pack attacks, so they closed in with a rush, Orca leading. There was no chance of getting away from them. Their speed was matchless, greater even than the racing dolphin's; their formation military and excellent—like a horn, a Zulu *impi's* horn.

And as they raced—just those straight-pointed back-fins—they suggested in a remarkable degree a flotilla of torpedo-boat destroyers rushing a battleship. But these destroyers drove their attack home. Unlike the wolf's flank attack, they drove their charge home at the head—the enormous, great, cavernous head and mouth—of the whale, perhaps because her thirteen or fourteen-foot horizontally fluked tail spelled death.

There was no proof that the starboard kind little brown eye of the whale saw Orca coming. There is proof that, eye or not—probably by some mysterious feeling of supersensitive touch before being touched possessed by whales—she was aware of him close alongside, and dived. He slashed at her immense lip, lost hold, and leaped clean over her, just in time to avoid that annihilating tail as it came down with a crash like thunder.

Orca swirled round in the air, grandly curving, up and over, in any other company a mighty torpedo shape, extraordinarily rounded at the head, black as polished jet above; white dazzling beneath; with a barb of white running into the black on either flank; a white streak behind the little, cruel, quick eye, and a purple crescent behind that tall, distinguishing back-fin—altogether a bold, bad shape, boldly arrayed, startlingly contrasted, a remarkable sight.

He fell with the splash of a 15-inch salvo—and the very foam looked shabby beside his spotless belly—and was in at the whale, had chopped as a steam hay-cutter chops, and was out again, quick almost as one could snap a finger. He hurtled clear, vanishing under the boiling maelstrom set up by the steam-hammer poundings of the whale's leviathan tail; and his companions hurled themselves, chopping the terrible, devastating, grampus chop at her head, in turn.

She dived, sounded, standing nigh upon her head, and in the whirlpool that followed Orca was tearing marble white blubber from her throat. She burst upward as the submarine mine bursts, and lifted bodily in one grand mountainous spring her whole colossal bulk clear of the reddening foam, scattering her foes, big as they were, as the stag, "breaking bay," scatters the hounds, and came down again with a thunder comparable only to the cataclysmal, abysmal fall of a landslide. As she fell, she saw Orca hanging to the throat of her giant babe.

But there is no need nor space to tell how, alternately attacking the mother to keep her away, and her young, that babe was done to death; how the carcass sank through the carmine-streaked, bottle-green waters;

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how the killers dived, and came up each time with pieces of their prey to consume on the surface, like dogs that snatch, and hurry into the street to consume, a bone. Was it sharks, or physical disability to feed submerged that forced them to do this? There is no need to tell how the old whale stole off in the interval, leaving a reddened wake flung in loops over the backs of the following waves behind her.

Orca was the first to finish and leave. Perhaps he had been the first to begin.

FOR many months now he had sailed the high seas at head of his little cohort of gladiators—all male killers, as one could tell by the great length of their back-fins, and all smaller than himself, one twenty feet, most of them a little under, but one twenty-three feet. Down along the Texas coast he had led them where they harried the tarpon, the giant silver king of the South; aye, and round the Horn too, to hold up the onrushing shoals of the leaping tuna—weighing up to four hundred pounds per fish—and turn them in terror from their path, so that they, who had been yearly visitors, did not visit that coast again for years.

They had fought the leviathan two-ton devil ray, challenged the fighting swordfish, sacked the hanging gardens of the sea around Nagasaki way, hunted the elusive dolphin up the coast of the States, intercepted the sea-lion upon his far travels, spread terror around the Sargasso weed, and now, leaving a trail of blood and devastation behind them, had gone thence up the Gulf Stream, east by north, to the realms of colder waters and duller days.

So far had Orca led them upon the warpath; but now the desire went from him to lead them longer, and in its stead came a greater desire. It had been growing within his ponderous, polished, nickel-steel bulk for days with the changing of the water's temperature until now, after this last fight of his, this last daring foray, it had become insistent.

Perhaps it was the taste of the blubber that awakened to flame long-smoldering memories in his mysterious brain. Perhaps it was the sight of a shearwater on still wings lightly skimming "the tops off the waves." Perhaps it was the twitter of a storm petrel "walking the waters" alone and eerily. Perhaps the smack of the cold wind against his high back-fin.

Later, when they came together—always in "line-ahead" formation, like a destroyer flotilla—undulating—there is no other word for their switchback motion—to a stretch of bright green sea, slashed with purple, flecked with "white horses," peopled under deep-blue clouds with striped dolphins let loose with play in joy at their own swiftness; leaping porpoises; sweeping, rigid-winged, pearly fulmar petrels; with storm-cloud colored hawk-winged skuas; and plum and lavender whale's backs, spouting twenty-foot jets of vapor white against that background, as steam escapes, Orca somehow got separated from his fellow grampuses after a delirious twenty minutes' race at tide-rip speed among the sweeping, swerving, sounding dolphins—one of which Orca swallowed alive—and he did not rejoin them.

Whales—and Orca, the grampus, was of the whale order, if not quite of their clan—have an uncanny way of refinding one another in the apparently blind deep, as some fish can also. It is to be presumed, therefore, that Orca could have made a cast or two and trailed his cohort upwind, if he desired. That he did not do so proves one thing—that he went away alone, straight away, and pretty quickly even for him, who could swim down the greyhound dolphin almost with ease, and for a pastime would outrush even the lightning-flash salmon.

Northeast he sailed steadily, almost as if driven by twin-screws, unhesitatingly, eating up the leagues; and the indigo cloud sank to the southward, and the sea, stained to port-wine and ruby in the setting sun, then ran out all oilily, like silk, by way of deep purple and back to black-green.

Far away, as he saw when he topped a wave-crest, islands and towering rock stacks were being blotted out in mist and spray. Then a red-and-white light winked solemnly at him through the scudding rain and the gathering night, to be followed later, as it grew quite dark, by three white flashes in quick succession—lights, lighthouses, beacons to guide man, not him, upon his lawful occasions over the face of the waters.

Not indeed that Orca needed any guiding. He was guided sufficiently by a compass, a wonderful one, in his head, and it had taken many hundreds of thousands of years to perfect it. Men call it instinct.

It was somewhere about the latitude of

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the last light that he struck, almost literally, a seal on his back playing, as seals love to do, with a floating spar. And such a seal! A great gray seal, six feet long, like what has been described in books as a monster.

The seal went off with a dry, wrenching roar, and with a most extraordinary gait, as if he were playing "ducks and drakes"—like a spent 12-inch shell—across the wave-tops. It was indeed his star turn in the speed line, and, allowing for the spray-bursts, a rather dramatic one. Also it was, or seemed to be, about the rapidity of a racing motor-boat, but it made no difference to Orca. Orca's course was marked by a seething white line converging upon the seal's "swimming hops." Then the two joined, and—*chop!* There was only half that seal. *Chop!* And there was no seal at all, only bubbles and a little red hidden by the dim dark.

But apart from this—and the diving under a Lerwick steam drifter, encountered in that dead dark which comes before a moon—he must have felt the presence of the vessel near him, as a bat can, because he could scarcely have seen her—also one very short argument with one very long blue whale, a ninety-footer, in a ninety-foot temper, as expressed by a ninety-horse-power tail, more or less, which Orca did not, probably could not, kill; and one open-mouthed charge through a seething shoal of mackerel that were a pure scintillating milky way of light; and a mighty big fright given to a lone fishing-smack, when, without warning, he stood up on end beside her, a thirty-foot sheeted ghost, and sighed one cavernous, elemental sigh that was meant to be a request for offal, but was really awful—nothing of coruscating importance transpired on that long run north.

DAY succeeded night, and night the day. The sea got up and went off in spurts of flying sand; the spurts broke up and ran into silky swells; rain blotted out the indigo sky, and the sky changed to pigeon-wing gray. Cold came too, and the wind began to sharpen its razors. Still Orca kept on, and as he went the night receded before him, and the days spread into the night. Till at last one morn the sky to the north and northeast grew all smudgy yellow, and that meant snow. It was the reflected light from snow-fields.

Then a block of ice went by, tumbling in the trough, with a little white bird, an ivory gull, riding ghostlike atop, and the air was filled with a dry, pounding, insistent thunder which, once heard, can never be forgot—the sea breaking upon an extensive field of floating ice-floes.

More floating ice-blocks followed, and more snow-white gulls. Then a party of soft, dovelike, uncanny, still-winged fulmar petrels came from nowhere out of the gathering snow-mist, to sail round Orca's hurrying back-fin, chuckling to each other not unlike fowls; and then—the seal.

It was the largest thing in seals Orca had ever clapped his little eyes upon; a great blue seal not an ounce under six hundred and fifty pounds in weight. It came up quite suddenly, almost under his blunt, round nose, and broke for the sound of the pounding ice-floes in a turmoil of foam and at the rate of knots. It seemed more concerned to get away from something beneath than to escape Orca's terrible presence though just possible it has scarce seen him.

Orca, not having eaten about twice as much as seemed necessary for the past hour or two, was hungry. He canted on one flipper as he altered course, and gave chase. Then he canted on the other flipper as he swerved violently in the opposite direction, and he ceased to give chase abruptly.

Something had roared in his little ear, a dry, throaty sort of roar, with much meaning in it.

Now the sea folk are a dumb crowd, as a rule, especially the whale and fish part of them. Only the white whale with his low, the narwhal with his grunt, and the rorqual with his sigh, break the silence upon the deep. And this roar, breathed so suggestively into Orca's ear, was none of these things. Wherefore was the grampus amazed.

Fifty yards away, to which distance he removed as quickly as you could wink, Orca fetched about and rolled in the trough, to see who had spoken; and he beheld, swimming easily as swiftly, a great white bear—green under water, yellow atop—probably measuring not less than eight feet long, nor scaling under a thousand pounds in weight. And the bear, apparently chasing the seal, must have all but collided with Orca as he came up.

Orca, however, had never made the acquaintance of the great ice bear, king of all

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the Arctic floes, before. All the same, he ought to have known what to expect by the carmine gridiron scrape as long as a man's arm, down the blue seal's side, which he had seen as the seal lay over on the turn to avoid him, and which was the bear's trade mark. He did not, however; and, having now lost sight of the seal, gave chase to the bear, for Orca feared nothing that swam the seas or crawled the bottom under the seas.

The bear left off using threatening language, and moved; and until one has seen it, one would never believe how the polar bear can go submarinely. Not that he had far to go. It does not do to have far to go when killers are about.

The tossing, tormented, tearing, tumbling edges of the surf-pounded floes loomed rocking up in front of the swimmers in a few moments—a jagged, thundering death. Next instant they were both under it, shooting through cold green depths below its thunderings, and—by now the bear's loosely, smoothly working hind legs had only ten yards to spare—then, up.

Orca found himself in a new world. Around him stretched a lake of cold jade-green water, across which the waves were pulsating truly; but they had lost their "smack," and all around, floating, still, pale green, white and blue, were floes of every size, from a few yards in extent to many hundreds of acres across; whilst between, in every direction, ran channels and "leads," and winding passages, and lakes, and bays, and inlets of purple water; and over all, drowning all like a pall, hung the thundering roar of the open ice upon the ice-edge.

The polar bear was scrambling up a deep blue-and-lavender floe-edge when Orca, adjusting the focus of his little eyes to the snow-glare, spotted him. Then, as indicated by the back-fin and a hiss of ripples, Orca shifted. The great bear accentuated his absurd tailless appearance of having just received a number-one sized kick posteriorly—by springing up with his hind legs well tucked in, then turned and slashed —once.

He arrived at Orca's polished jet nose just as Orca, hurling half his bulk almost bodily up the floe-side, shut his jaws with the clash as of a strong-room door; and the killer sank back with a sigh, nearly blinded with his own blood. He had bitten an inch short, but—well, a polar bear can lift a six-hundred-pound blue seal out of the water clean up on to the ice with such a blow, and that stroke did not brain Orca on the slippery spot, all among the icicles and the red shrimps staining the water's edge, only because he was Orca, and a whale, and they, by reason of their anti-deep-sea-pressure diving-suit of blubber, are practically unbrainable. But it made a nasty mess of his head.

For two solid, freezing hours, while the sky burned faint yellow and the snow warmed faint pink—the only sign that it was night that weird place vouchsafed—that hated, feared, sharp, high back-fin of Orca's patrolled up and down the floe-edge, waiting for that bear to offer just one more chance. But he never did. He retired discreetly instead, and, digging a lair in the snow, fell complacently asleep—just a yellow blotch, black soles of feet and black nose-tip the only things breaking the everlasting white and green and faint blue for miles.

Then Orca sighed again his shockingly empty, cold, suggestive sigh and went away, and came by way of winding channels, forever opening and shutting as the floes came together and parted according to the wind, to the vast, still heart of the floe-sea, where the water was as motionless as polished glass, and the air was as still in the sun as the icicles hanging from the overhung blue floe-edges themselves.

HERE during the next night or day, Orca spotted a primrose patch upon the faintly pink snow, against an ultramarine pool of fresh water. He would not have seen it but for the fact that he had foolishly stranded his fifteen or twenty tons displacement upon a submerged projecting tongue of the ice-foot, in trying to swim out from between two great floes that were slowly closing together, and with their inexorable million-ton weight could have crushed anything.

Here is the scene—jet-black and purer than foam-white monster, in blue sea, upon green ice-tongue, with gray mist, among pink, green and blue ice-floes, under smudged, dirty yellow sky.

Orca saw the primrose patch as he heaved himself up to refloat, so to speak, and knew it for a polar bear half a mile away.

Then he saw the bear take the water on the far side, and then he had to take one of

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the longest dives he had ever been forced into, in order to escape being squashed as flat as any pancake between the floes, and when he got to open water and came up again—there was the bear, arguing hectically with something big in the water, that splashed.

Orca marked the spot, and dived once more.

It was a good aim, for when next he appeared, he was close beside the bear, who was in a smother of spume, arguing terrifically with something long, and fat, and brown, and yellow.

Orca opened his jaws—his head was still very sore and raw, a memento of the first bear's cuff—and—something groaned at the back of him. It was the most unholy groan ever heard, and there was a rushing of waters as if a torpedo-boat came that way; but it must have been instinct, or his marvelous sense of touch, that made Orca dive considerably more instantly and suddenly than he had come up.

As he surged under, he was aware, out of the corner of his eye, of eight feet of pure ivory, straight, twisted from left to right, and pointed as a lance, shooting over his back, barely missing him, and of the snarl of waters as a great spotted black-and-white body hurled by at immense speed, almost colliding with him.

That was a narwhal, a whalelike beast too, the unicorn of the seas, whose wonderful single, straight horn would, if Orca had dived only a fraction of a second less instantly, have spitted him through and through. Evidently it was the mother, or the father truly, of the long spotty thing the bear had been trying to kill; but Orca did not care about that.

His terribleness had never been treated with such daring insolence in his life; and he spun upon himself open-jawed, ready as always to do battle and abolish this horned one, and its foe, the bear too, if need be, when, without so much as a splash of warning, several things happened almost at once.

A tall—not nearly so tall as his—sharp, upright, unmistakable back-fin cut the glassy water as a diamond cuts a window; there was a dazzling flash of some big black-and-white shining shape past him, which in one white-hot flash of time he recognized as a female killer, for whom he had come so far to seek; the water literally boiled over its brink, filled with tearing, huge, one-horned, black-and-white, and brown-and-white spotted shapes, going like the wind behind the "cow" killer.

Without thinking, without realizing, perhaps, the narrowness of the space, the number and size of the shapes, which were narwhals, whose young the female killer must have attacked and driven to the surface in the first place, without indeed knowing quite what he was doing, Orca turned ponderously about and tried to stop the rush, and— Help!

But it was too late. There was no time to check the terrific impetus of so vast a bulk hurtling down the clear water lane at full speed. The big old bull narwhal, measuring quite sixteen feet without counting his horn, leader of the herd, charged full tilt into Orca as that beast's mighty, brilliant form turned broadside on, filling up almost the whole of the channel.

There was a single awful, sickening thud of impact; and a still more awful and deathly silent pause. Orca slowly straightened, arched backward, bent into a rigid, quivering bow, and relaxed, like a spring released, into a quivering, trembling, limp and inert mass. The old bull narwhal's horn had spitted him clean through the heart and slain him—instantly.

And five hundred yards away the sharp, upright, black back-fin of the female, or "cow," or truthfully, young "flapper" killer or grampus, reappeared, cutting knife-like above the tranquil surface again between the floes, where presently another and far taller back-fin, the back-fin of a "bull" or male killer, presently joined it.

Such a rival—about twenty-two feet long—Orca could have fought and beaten, if— But what would you? Fate, the most remorseless foe of all, had willed otherwise.

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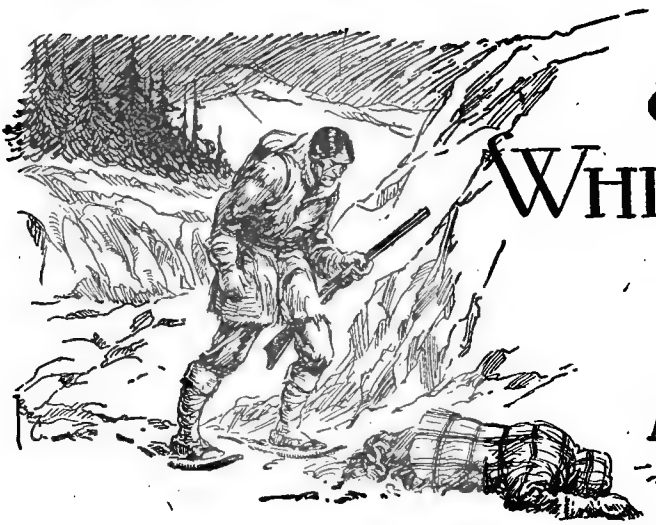

The White Devil

by ALBERT APPLE

FIFTY-ODD miles north of Burnt River Crossing, with the thermometer thirty below zero, an old Ojibway Indian snowshoed along a portage that skirted a tamarack swamp. At a fork in the blazed trail he turned to the right, rounded a quartz cliff and paused barely in time to avoid stumbling over the body of an unconscious man, who had collapsed in the snow.

The stranger was bundled in a red-and-black mackinaw, its long collar turned up around his head. Attached to his fur cap was a cleverly devised fur mask which extended down and completely covered his face save for eye-holes and a breathing-slit.

The Indian lifted the mask, felt of the cheeks and nose, found they were not yet frozen. The flesh was warm. Plainly a case of exhaustion. If the frost had not clutched the edges of his lungs, there was still time to save him.

Having ascertained that the pulse strongly indicated life, the Indian made further inventory of his find. The stranger was a Chinese, eyes with a thyroid protuberance in a plump and benevolent face.

The wrists of the Chinese were coupled by link handcuffs.

It was considerable work for an old man, even an Indian, but the Ojibway managed to drag the stricken traveler to a trail cabin about a mile farther on.

A trail cabin in the Far North usually starts as the log shelter of a gold prospector. Occasionally it is the abandoned home of a settler, who wastes years of his life before admitting the truth that he can not wrest a living from the pocket of earth among the boulders and outcroppings of quartz bedrock that he chooses as a potential farm.

The original owner abandons the log house. If he be not so embittered of heart that he burns it so he can shake a wrathful fist at towering flames when he retreats over the horizon, it gradually becomes a trail cabin known far and wide as the shelter of all transients.

In time these trail cabins become stocked, as grateful guests leave tributes—tin dishes, home-made furniture, possibly even a stove. Whether stove or fireplace, it is a law of the Far North—respected from Alaska to Hudson Bay—that all decent wanderers on departing must leave the dishes washed and a fire built and ready to start. The next tenant may arrive in a blizzard, his heels hot with the breath of death's bloodhounds, and freeze if he has to pause to split kindling and drag in firewood.

Arrived at the trail cabin with his companion, who had been jolted back to semi-consciousness by the rough sledding, the Indian found the door wedged shut with a soft wooden peg, as per custom, to keep out the wandering black bears. Be it known that a black bear's supreme ambition is to dismember a stove and scatter its pieces at great distances and far apart.

A fire was ready to light in the tall box-stove. On a shelf, covered with a tatter

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of oilcloth as protection against possible dripping water, was a box of safety matches. Piled along one wall was enough kindling and cordwood to keep the stove going for twenty-four hours.

Two minutes after match was applied, the stove was roaring.

By snow rubs, hard smacks and hot water poured down his throat, the Chinese was brought to his senses. All that he really needed was a good thawing-out; obtaining which, he recuperated rapidly.

The two men contemplated each other with poker faces and expressionless eyes. Then came recognition. Prior to the Chinese' escape a month previously they had been fellow-prisoners in the penitentiary at Fort William, Ontario. The Chinese, with the instinct of the hunted, hurriedly looked about the cabin for the rifle he had carried over his back. Reading his thoughts, the old Indian grunted:

"Don't be afraid. You safe with me."

He spoke without any pronounced crudity of diction, having acquired considerable ease with the King's English during many years in the white man's prison. The Chinese matched him in this accomplishment, apparently being educated.

"You escape, too?"

"No, I serve my time."

The Indian's mouth narrowed to a harsh slit.

"Twenty year," he went on. "They no let me out a day ahead of time. When you go jail in Canada you go jail—no monkey business."

"Your name?" the Chinese suggested politely.

"They call me the Timber Wolf."

"You sent up for——"

"I shoot a Hudson Bay runner," the Indian answered quietly. "They hang me, except man I shoot only crippled, not die. My rifle no good, I guess. Those days I stand off hundred feet and drive nail with bullets. When I shoot partridge, I shoot him on wing with rifle through head; no spoil the breast meat with shotgun. What your name?"

"In Canada, call me Wong."

"What you in jail for?"

"Murder; second degree."

"You escape month ago?"

"Yes."

"Up here, you safe unless meet Dominion Police. Royal Mounted no work east far as Ontario. I hear them talk down at Fort William. They think you try get to States. Watch border. Where you get rifle and clothes?"

"Steal them. From a settler. No like steal. Have to. Must get 'way. I take his address. Bimeby, send pay."

"He not have a file, eh?"

The Chinese gazed mournfully at his handcuffs.

"No."

"Fifty below zero in another week. That mean you die sure. Only woodsman live through Winter up here. You get far up north, not so much snow, but plenty cold. You never last that far, though. Better you come with me."

Wong leaped eagerly at the offer.

"Where you go?" he inquired, barking the words.

His vocal mask dropped for a moment and an intensely human, almost pathetic emotion agitated his voice.

"I go—home," the Timber Wolf murmured musically, lingering caressingly on the word. "I go back to my people. We got settlement, about twenty of us. I hear that's all left now. Many hundred there twenty year ago when they lock me up."

He removed his fur cap and tossed it aside, disclosing snow-white hair.

"I'm old. Go back to die—one year, maybe five, not more than ten. We got Indian graveyard. My father buried there, his father, his father's father."

"You keep me safe—yes? I make it worth your while."

The Timber Wolf nodded.

"Until Spring. Then I send you with guide down through Quebec; you get across to States where no one see you make trip. What you say your name?"

"Wong."

"All right, Wong. We got twenty mile to go, then reach my people. Wind she blow outside. Soon dark. Northern light come up. Last night I see Thunder Eagle in sky. That mean trouble. If for white man, good!"

For a half-hour they kept up a running tirade, a duet, cursing the white devils responsible for their incarceration in prison. By the time hunger began bothering them, they were as thick as thieves.

The Timber Wolf groped on the shelves until he found a bucket, in which he melted snow for drinking-water. The shelves also

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yielded a muslin sack filled with Hudson Bay tea, which grows wild; a small bag of soya beans, a tin of salt, a tin of dried vegetables and a small chunk of bacon.

Evidently the cabin had been occupied recently, for from the rafters hung a venison roasting-piece, a partridge and three salmon trout. Frozen, they were refrigerated to last until the snow went out in the Spring.

The prize find was an old corncob pipe and a glass jar with a handful of tobacco. Solemnly the two guests passed the pipe back and forth, three puffs at a time.

"You save my life," the Chinese murmured musically. "Wong not forget."

He added a string of monotone words in his own tongue—words which the Timber Wolf did not understand, yet which he was psychically conscious were in the nature of a vow.

While the Indian cooked, Wong continued the exploration of the cabin's treasures. Discovering a broken file on the top shelf, he squealed with delight and set himself to the task of freeing his wrists. He squealed with delight again when, the handcuffs filed through at last, he hurled them clatteringly to the floor.

They ate a substantial meal and were becoming drowsy. Two plank bunks without bedding were built along one wall. With economy of conversation such as is characteristic among men fagged out from a long day on the trail they lay down in their clothes and drifted off to sleep.

The wind moaned in the trees outside and flung rustling snow against the log walls.

IN THE gray dawn of morning, while his Chinese companion slept on, the Timber Wolf built up the fire, then quietly went outdoors. They would be hitting the trail within a few hours, and the code demanded that he replace the stock of frozen salmon trout they had eaten. The guest to follow them must not find an empty larder.

The Timber Wolf knew this country, every inch of it. A few minutes brought him down through a shore growth of young cedars, out on a small lake. It had been an exhilarating trip, short as it was, to a man free after twenty years in prison and loving the wilds by nature.

The snow was three feet deep on the level; ravines drifted to their brims. Little of the big pines and hemlocks showed except black, icy trunks; the branches were deeply concealed in snow that covered them like thick cake frosting. The forest was a snow cavern with an infinite number of passageways.

Using a shovel, part of the trail cabin's equipment, the Timber Wolf cleared away the snow, got down to the lake ice and began chopping with his woodsman's hatchet.

He was hailed in Ojibway speech from ahead. A young Indian was snowshoeing in over the lake. They talked in their native Saulteurs tongue.

"What do you do, venerable old man?"

"I catch fish, young sapling."

"Fish?"

The young Indian laughed quietly, respectfully, and resumed in English:

"White man fish all these lakes out, long ago. You fish long time before you get strike."

The Timber Wolf, unbelieving, frowned his bewilderment.

"Fished out?" he repeated dubiously, also in English. "Why, when Indian find lake fish gone, he fish some other place till get plenty again."

"White man not Indian," was the grim rejoinder. "He ashamed he fish lake out, so he put in young fish. Bring them in milk-cans. But not many live. Fishing no good now, to what it was years ago. White man catch his little fish before they have time to grow big."

"Must be many white man live around here now to need so many fish," the Timber Wolf grunted. "Travel long way. No see."

The young Indian scoffed ironically.

"*Wugh!* The fish, they caught by white man who come many thousand mile. He want what he call sport. Bring fish in, whole boatful, let rot on shore. All white man want to do when he get outdoors is destroy."

"Surely," the Timber Wolf reasoned, perplexed, "surely the white man's tribe make him stop. They pass law—yes?"

"So!" admitted the young Indian sourly, curling his lip. "But law not come, limiting number fish he can catch one day, until fish nearly all killed. That the white man's way—he make law, stop thing, when too late. All white man want do is destroy.

"Me down some time, many time, in big city. See white man put up building—only few watch. Then tear down building—big crowd."

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"You live down Namaycush settlement?"

"No; me a trapper."

"Where you from?"

"Caughnawagna."

"That near Montreal Island, eh?"

"Yes; can see from Mount Royal," the young Indian boasted. "It where Big John Canadian chief. You know him? So? He only man ever shoot Lachine Rapids in canoe."

"You a liar," the Timber Wolf countered calmly. "You no belong Caughnawagna. Face too black. You Algonquin."

"Hamstring your tongue, venerable old man, else I shove you through that open hole in ice to feed fish."

"You no do that," the Timber Wolf retorted confidently. " 'Way back, me belong Three Fires Council of Ojibways, Ottawas and Potawatamis. Even now, me high in secret Mide Society."

The young Algonquin unconsciously stepped away.

"Then Thunder Eagle guard you," he breathed, awed.

"Yes; you see him, Thunder Eagle, last night in sky?"

The young Algonquin shivered. Keeping at a respectful distance, he edged toward shore.

"A thousand pipes of peace, venerable old man. May the lynx never drop on you from a tree."

"The winds call you!"

The Timber Wolf dismissed his visitor. He proceeded to ignore the Algonquin, who hastily shifted his pack and snowshoed to shore, vanishing through the cedars.

"He not know how fish like old man," the Timber Wolf muttered. "Old Indian catch fish anywhere." And straightway proved it by landing four.

What the Algonquin had told him about the white man's destructiveness worried the Timber Wolf. When he had been put down in prison twenty years before, this country had been a paradise of timber-growth, game and fish. Eking out a living had been an easy matter for the red men.

It was all Greek to him; he could not understand it; like all Canadian Indians of the north country, he never killed even a tree unless absolutely necessary. Starving in the bush during Winter-time, an Indian would seek a jack-pine and cut out a strip of bark, diamond-shaped, about two feet long and eight inches wide; the inside of this bark, scraped, yielded a paste with sufficient nutriment to sustain human life; but the Indian always took pains to put the strip of bark back on the tree, binding it tightly with vines so that the tree would live.

Back in the cabin the Timber Wolf wakened the Chinese from his slumber, a stupor of extreme exhaustion. Wong blinked, sat up, stretched his aching muscles, rose and helped prepare breakfast.

"Now," the Timber Wolf promised as he wedged the door tightly shut and stood outside the trail cabin, "now I show you great forest. This country, you see, has been burn' over by fires; white man very careless when he break camp; only second growth around us. On over that hill ahead, we cross Ragged River and hit into forest of big trees. They many hundred year old, some of them, my grandfather say."

At the crest of the hill, a gasp of amazement from the Indian, then a moan of anguish. He pointed ahead with quivering finger. As far as the eye could reach the country was barren. Up from the snow, amid a myriad of huge stumps, rose only the thin growth of young saplings.

"When I leave here," the Timber Wolf muttered, aghast, "the trees so thick you hardly get between them, and they reach high up, 'most to clouds."

Wong smirked cynically—almost a leer.

"Honorable white man has been here since you went to prison twenty years ago," he explained with a wire edge to his voice. "All he think of is today and destroy—chop down, kill, waste. I hear of one case: Ontario give a logging-company permit to take out one hundred thousand trees. They fell three hundred thousand. Then logging-crew come along, pick out every third tree, the best. Other two hundred thousand, they rot under snow."

"Where they do this?" demanded The Timber Wolf. "How far?"

"Oh," Wong informed the other placidly, "what you see now is same way to Atlantic Ocean. They talk now of planting more trees—reforesting. That like white man—he destroy all; then, when too late, try to replace. Never can plant much tree up here; soon as timber cut down, rains wash the soil away and leave bedrock exposed. Took many thousand years for Nature to make these forests, slowly growing larger trees and turning their leaves into soil. All

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Nature's work of many thousand years, white man destroy in short time."

"You talk the fine English," the Timber Wolf commented absently. "I wish I talk him like that."

"Oh," Wong explained reminiscently, "I go to white man's college in States, long time ago, until I get in trouble."

They plodded on, taking their time. The Timber Wolf had retreated into his psychic shell, brooding, gloomy. The river was crossed—vanished behind them as they *swush-swushed* mechanically ahead on their snowshoes.

It was late afternoon—the leaden gray of four o'clock—when they mounted the last divide and moved down into the valley of the Indian's youth. The old man's eyes were gleaming as they darted about, seeking signs of his tribe's settlement.

The thought kept reoccurring to him that he had lost his bearings and wandered into a strange nightmare country. The giant trees, old-time landmarks, were gone. Time had clouded his memory, but finally he observed a peculiar rock formation, remembered it, crooned tender Ojibway words at the distortion of quartz—knew this really was home.

A hundred yards ahead, through a tangle of brush, a fawn-colored mass moved languidly. Wong's rifle slipped easily to his shoulder. The Timber Wolf struck it down.

"That not a deer; it a man," he cautioned sharply.

The man came out into the scattered saplings to meet them. He was a huge, burly chap, pronouncedly brunette, with eyes and a three weeks' stubble of beard almost as glossy black as Wong's. Altogether rather a repulsive mixture of generations of crossbred races, a clinker in the melting-pot. A double-bitted ax, carried easily in rifle posture over a shoulder of his brown mackinaw, indicated him to be a member of a logging crew.

"Hel-lo!" the Timber Wolf greeted him eagerly. "We look for Indian town. You know where they camp?"

The white man inhaled deeply and spat out the gray smoke of a home-tailored cigaret. He grinned with a brute's whimsical delight at imparting unwelcome news.

"You come a year late," he mocked. "You undertakers?"

"What you mean?"

"All the Indians, they die last Winter of flu."

"Flu?" repeated the Timber Wolf stupidly, his heart sinking. "Oh, yes—yes."

He remembered; had heard talk about it at the prison. Flu—one of the peculiar maladies developed by the filth and unnatural life of the white man's congested civilization.

"They all gone?" he urged pleadingly. "All?"

"Every man-jack of 'em," the white man nodded emphatically. "We found their bones when they showed up missing as we come up last Spring. There was a doctor along with us, a sick-shop man from the States, kidding himself into believing he was a fisherman. We'd picked him up at the Sound, where we'd gone for a fling after our Winter's logging. I mind it got him all worked up and excited, how the flu germs ever got this far through the bush. It's so far away from a settlement here, and out of the track of most trappers, that he couldn't figure how the disease was carried. He told us a heap-sight about flu germs—how they travel in the air, even through a brick wall, he said, though I think he was talking through his hat."

"Then my son, he gone too, and my grandson," the Timber Wolf muttered in monotonous, dazed tones. "That why the letters stop. So this is what the white man do—bring death—destroy!"

"Ah, but the white man—we make the profits, develop the country's resources. You red devils wasted your time here. We put things to use."

"Yes," the Timber Wolf countered acidly, "you make everything but happiness. Tell me, eh, you a white man born Canada?"

"Well, I should snort!" was the indignant grunt. "Native-born son. Done well, too, considering the start the old man give me. Money in the bank, scads of it.

"And what have you Indians got, after owning the land for as many years as I've got hairs on me head? Nothing! No, sir, nothing at all—except special hunting and fishing privileges and a measly pension from the white man that conquered you."

The Timber Wolf turned on the white man the shrewd eyes of old age. There was a gleam in those eyes, a penetrating and terrible something that the white man could not meet. He turned away and shrugged, an icy shiver tingling up his spine

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and spreading out along his shoulderblades. He had seen such a look once before, in the eyes of a lumberjack who had gone raving crazy from drinking Jamaica ginger.

"The Indian got something white man not got."

"Yeh? What's that?"

"Content."

"May be," the woodsman admitted indifferently. "But we have the jack, the kale, the old gold to show for what we've done for the country."

Wong spoke up for the first time.

"Sure you don't mean, 'to the country'?"

The Timber Wolf silenced the Chinese by an upraised palm that indicated he preferred to handle the white man alone.

"You talk lot 'bout money," he queried with a cunning mask of indifference. "How you get him?"

"Me?"

The white man drew himself up proudly.

"Why, I'm the guy that logged this country."

"So?"

The Timber Wolf parried quickly.

"You mean, you cut down all these trees?"

"Well, not with me own hands. But I was boss of the logging-crews. And I tell you what, I sure picked the bones clean."

The Timber Wolf looked about, scowled and nodded.

"Before this," the white man continued, "I was in the fishing-business. "

He chuckled.

"I had a netting-license, and, believe me, before they got hep and stopped me I had taken out of these lakes about the last possible penny in fish. It was a swell stroke of business."

Early night was closing in rapidly, settling down over the valley like a black blanket. There was no wind. An uncanny, sepulchral silence haunted the place, so still that the great flakes of snow could be distinctly heard as they collided in the air and settled on the sugary surface crust.

There was a certain electric tension, radiating from the old Indian, that only Wong recognized. Like most of his race, his intuition was developed almost to the point of clairvoyance.

From the northern horizon a glowing white shaft shot up like a searchlight. It groped back and forth like a pendulum upside down, seemingly feeling for a star to cling to. In a twinkling it was one of a dozen such shafts in a row—a typical colorless display of aurora borealis.

Darkness had descended in the brief period of five minutes.

"Time to turn in," the white man suggested, starting as if shaking himself from a trance. "The way to my cabin leads past the log huts where the Indians had their settlement. You can make yourselves at home there—though," he added in afterthought with a heartless, cynical laugh, "you may have to kick some of the bones out of your way. If you're about early in the morning I'll treat you to as fine a display of ax-work as you or any one else ever saw. There's twelve giant hemlocks still standing over by the Silver Rapids, and I'm going to fell the whole twelve of them. I saved them from the logging-crew—put one over on the fat bosses down in Toronto —as some additional plunder for myself."

"Twelve hemlocks?"

The Timber Wolf's breath hissed inward between his teeth. He knew the trees.

THERE were thirty or forty cabins in the Indian settlement—just how many, the visitors could not make out in the gloom. Prowling among them was a like a midnight reconnaissance of a graveyard to Wong. To the Timber Wolf the inspection was sad; yet the place did not seem forsaken in one sense. Memory peopled it with sturdy bucks, fat and stolid squaws, lithe and active young Indian children. In the wailing of the wind he fancied he heard the familiar crying of a papoose.

They selected a cabin with a stove, found candles on a shelf, lighted them, then dined extensively on four partridges they had picked up during the day.

"The white man will never cut down those twelve trees," the Timber Wolf informed the Chinese as soon as he and Wong were alone. "The trees, they planted long ago by Mide secret society as monuments to twelve of our mightiest Ojibway chiefs."

Wong was whistling metallically between his teeth.

"So?" he invited. "How you stop?"

"Oh, no other person within twenty mile or more. No one hear rifle-shot."

"Shooting, though," suggested Wong blandly, "is so unsportsmanlike. Now if you fought a duel it wouldn't be so bad. That'd be giving him a run for his money.

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But you can't fight a duel. That wouldn't do, for me. I have to have you to guide me out of this hell of ice and snow. And in a duel he get you sure. Twenty years in prison not good for the aim.

"Now if Wong handling it he make up some kind of gamble. If not so cold, ask white man to play *fli loo.*"

"What that?"

"*Fli loo,*" Wong expanded dreamily, the words rolling deliciously from his thick lips, "*fli loo* is the greatest game of chance ever originated by the worshipers of Tu Chieng Kui, god of gambling."

"How you play him?"

"Make a jack-pot. Then players sit on floor. Each have lump of sugar in front of him. One whose lump of sugar has fly light on it first win pot."

The Timber Wolf pondered this thoughtfully.

"No flies now in Winter," he reminded solemnly. "Anyway white man already play his hand—and lose."

Conversation lagged during dinner. A whistling, sandpapery melody continued incessantly outside. Rapidly it grew louder. A blizzard was on, full force.

Around seven o'clock the latch on the door lifted. In from the black night, half-thrown by a blast of icy winds, came the white man. With him, a torrent of snow that shot across the room and lodged in crevices of the log wall. So powerful was the wind that it seemed to take all of the white man's strength to close the door with his shoulder.

"Terrible night, terrible!" he chattered, huddling the pink-hot stove. "Lonesome as the dead in my cabin. I'm glad you men dropped along. Somehow I've never noticed the loneliness as much as tonight. Sort of something in the air, as if a pair of icy claws were going to reach through the logs and take me by the throat.

"Guess I forgot to introduce myself. My name's Hicks—Dan Hicks."

"The Indian dead all walk in blizzards," the Timber Wolf informed him in a monotone.

"Eh?"

The hair probably bristled on Hicks' head.

"They look for the things they lose in life."

An exceptionally powerful blast shook the door of hewn planks, shook it violently, loudly, with an uncanny menace. Then the violence ceased and a monotonously regular sandpapering sound came from all four walls and roof of the cabin. It was snow, the relentless destroyer, striving to extinguish all life.

"Come!" called the Timber Wolf dramatically. "Come in!"

He waited a moment, as if confidently expecting some departed Indian's ghost to open the door.

"I—I guess I better latch the door and put the two-by-four bar across it," Hicks suggested nervously.

He ran tongue around dry lips. "It—it might blow open," he added.

As he worked at the door the Timber Wolf smiled at his back. He had learned what he wanted to know: This white man had a streak of yellow. That meant he would be easy to handle.

"You're too light for an Algonquin," Hicks probed. "Breed?"

"No breed."

"Ojibway maybe?"

"Yes; Anishinabeg."

This latter word was what the Ojibways called themselves—"spontaneous men." It suggested explosive, dangerous to handle. Hicks apparently knew the meaning. Caution appeared in his eyes, which he began keeping on the Indian.

And now above the blizzard came a blood-curdling chorus—half-snarl, half-howl—the battle-cry of timber wolves running in a pack, their combination for war.

"*Sacré!*" gasped Hicks. "I didn't know the wolves were this close to the settlement. You'll maybe put me up for the night? I came over without my rifle. Wouldn't dare make the trip back in the dark. It's black as an old hat, and the snow's so thick it's even snuffed out the northern lights. A full quarter-mile to my cabin, and the wolves might get me."

"They would," the Indian comforted him grimly. "The spirits of dead Ojibways, my ancestors, run with the wolf-pack along the Silver Rapids."

"Coincidence!" Wong chortled. "His name is Timber Wolf."

Hicks slumped heavily to the edge of a bunk and sighed. The sigh was almost a rasp.

"You not need a rifle," Wong interposed. "You got sidearms."

"Yes, but this is an old-style gat—only

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six shots. It jams too, occasionally. My rifle's got a magazine that carries sixteen cartridges."

"Old style, eh?" Wong pricked up his ears. "Chinese very fond of old things. Let me see it?"

Hicks hesitated. Instinctively he felt that he was not among friends. In him there was little of the psychic, yet enough to fortify him with a certain animal caution. It was, he knew, bad policy to surrender one's weapon in a hostile gathering. On the other hand, next to death there was nothing he dreaded so much as a wolf-pack.

He reflected swiftly. The pack's battle-cry indicated that it was circling the cabin. If he wanted to remain all night he must pacify the two strangers. Reluctantly he handed over his revolver.

Nothing unusual resulted, rather to Hicks' surprize. Wong held the weapon studiously in his right palm, then deftly flipped it about in an examination that made Hicks wonder if the Chinese were fast enough with his eyes to keep up with his fingers.

The Indian had begun to pace restlessly about the cabin. Hicks' attention turned to him. The Timber Wolf's wrinkled old face had tightened until it resembled an inflexible metal mask. His eyes were phosphorescent with violent emotion.

Wong interrupted.

"Very good gun, even if old."

Hicks involuntarily sighed with relief as he returned the revolver to his holster.

"Well," Wong announced placidly, "the white man has destroyed the fish, the game and the forests. Everything the white man touches in nature he destroys. That makes an old Indian like the Timber Wolf hate him. It's the white man's ways that caused flu, which brought death to all the Timber Wolf's people in this former settlement.

"Worst of all, you come along and are going to destroy the twelve big hemlocks, each a monument to a departed chief. It's like profaning a graveyard. Do you know what we'd do with such a man if he even contemplated the deed in our country?"

Hicks was a trifle pale. His right hand wandered carelessly to his belt and rested on the revolver-butt.

"We'd debate the subject a lot," Wong informed him blandly. "Then there are various ways we might dispose of him. We might feed him to the sacred crocodiles or lock him up with a few hundred starving rats. More likely we'd give him the death of a thousand cuts—have a Chinese surgeon skilfully slice that many pieces from him before allowing the knife to touch an artery or vital organ. All around, Mr. Hicks, the way I look at it, you might as well be in the hands of the devil as Mr. Timber Wolf."

"I surmise that much," Hicks sneered, mustering a show of indifference. "In fact, it occurred to me when we first met."

"I underestimated your astuteness."

There was a long silence in the cabin while the cordwood in the pink-hot stove crackled and roared. Outside, the blizzard howled a trifle louder, snow sandpapered the walls and roof a trifle more gratingly to the nerves, and the wolf call seemed a trifle more ravenous.

"In turn," Hicks ventured cautiously, "I perceive that I am not going to let myself sleep much this night."

"Oh, you will go to sleep all right," Wong countered quietly. "Only, Mr. Hicks, it will be a sleep from which you will never waken."

He turned to the Indian.

"How are you going to kill him, Timber Wolf? Have you decided? Ah! I see you favor the knife."

Unconsciously during his pacing and in his mounting rage the Indian had unsheathed his hunting-knife. His eyes, blazing with hate, were riveted on Hicks. Mechanically he took two steps forward.

Hicks' revolver roared.

The Indian's hand went to his heart. In his eyes came a blank stare, over his face a look of mild surprize, as he sank in a heap.

Hicks turned the gun on Wong.

A click, but no report as he pulled the trigger.

Wong held forth his clenched right hand and opened the fingers. Snug in his palm were five cartridges.

"I was careful to remove any that might be used against me," he informed Hicks, feigning ennui. "It was a decided error on your part to allow me to examine the gun."

"Then why," Hicks gasped, "why did you leave a cartridge to kill your friend? Or— Ah, that was it! He wasn't your friend."

"Friend?"

Wong's voice was icy.

"You do not know," he went on. "Far more of a friend than you ever had or were.

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But the golden dream he built himself during twenty years in prison vanished today when he witnessed the white man's destruction. There was nothing for him to live for, nothing ahead except misery and despair, loneliness and lost illusions. It was better that he die. He is happier now, gone to his happy hunting-ground, where the game and trees never perish, where the white man can not rob him.

"Besides, he had lived his life. He was a very old man, was the Timber Wolf—well into the seventies, Mr. Hicks, I'd estimate."

Hicks stared, bewildered.

"It is futile to explain," Wong protested wearily with a contemptuous snap of his fingers. "You do not understand the Oriental viewpoint."

"You speak —— good English talk for a Chink."

It was a futile, irrelevant thing to say, as occurred to Hicks immediately the words left his mouth. But somehow he was so bursting with wild fears that he had to say something.

"I am well-educated," Wong informed him coldly.

"Then you—you like us. You are not like this crazy Indian. You bear the white man no grudge."

"Not exactly a grudge," Wong answered with a smirk of pity. "I have, for your race, rather contempt. You are destroyers. That is unfortunate for the plant and animal life which a kindly nature has placed on earth. It has, however, one comforting feature. In your destructiveness you are living unnatural lives, breeding germs and lowered powers of resistance that are sowing the seeds of your own destruction.

"You do not love Nature. Quite naturally Nature does not love you. The yellow races of the Orient, Mr. Hicks, are sitting back, watching the white devils commit slow suicide."

"Did you," Hicks queried tensely, "did you know this old Indian long?"

"What is time? A day may be a thousand years, a thousand years like a day. He was a convict in a prison from which I recently escaped, down at Fort William."

A great sigh of relief escaped Hicks. He leaned back and slapped his knees in delight. A smile spread upward from the edges of his mouth, dividing his cheeks with a hideous slit.

"Escaped convict, eh?" he chuckled. "Then I am in no danger from you."

"I have an excellent rifle," Wong informed him, producing it from behind. "Not only that; I am a fairly good shot at long distance, an excellent shot at close range. Kindly move over to the far wall, Mr. Hicks, and keep your hands above you while I frisk you for dangerous implements."

"My God!" Hicks gasped as he half-staggered across the room. "You're not going to shoot me?"

"That would be letting you out too easily. No, Mr. Hicks, I am not going to shoot you. I am going to tie you hand and foot for the night with a few Chinese sailor knots. In the morning we'll start for the nearest town, where I'm going to turn you over to the Dominion Police. You are going to be put down for murder, and you'll be a white-haired old man like the Timber Wolf when you get out—provided they don't hang you."

A thousand minute beads of water stood on Hicks' pale forehead.

"If you do," he choked agitatedly, "if you do, I'll peach on you—tell 'em you're an escaped convict."

"That won't be necessary," Wong retorted blandly. "I intend accompanying you, so I can testify at the trial."

"You'll go back to prison to serve your time out?"

Hicks gaped, amazed, uncomprehending.

"You'll do all that to avenge your old friend?" he cried.

"To avenge what you, representing the white devils, have done to him and his," Wong corrected succinctly. "You will never be able to understand it, but there's nothing a Chinese will not do for his friend. Besides, I have only another year to serve. As time goes, that is nothing. Those twelve hemlocks over by Silver Rapids will be safe for another hundred years, when word creeps back through the bush what happened to one man who decided to destroy them."

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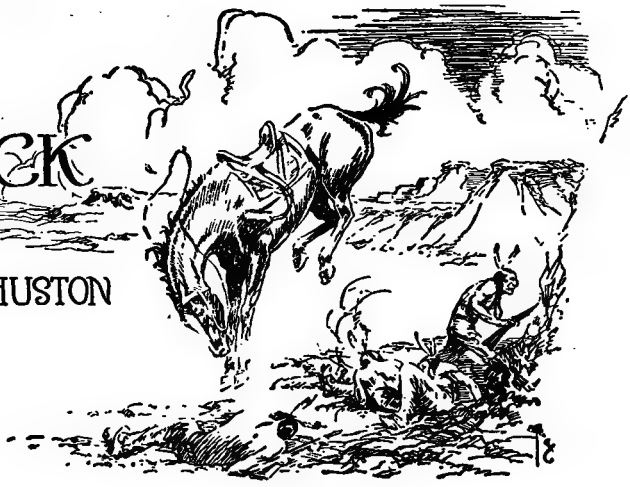
BLUE DICK

by FRANK H. HUSTON



"IN '62 the 1st Oregon Volunteer Cavalry with Geo. Curry as colonel was stationed along the Columbia, from The Dalles to the Cascades, to keep the trail open and the Injins, mainly under old Pulain, shet.

"Pulie's bunch had been right biggity, killing, jabbing and murdering the settlers and immigrants right along; and Curry, notwithstanding he had a dozen or so Nepercies (Nez Percés) for scouts, and a feller name of Gale, a mountaineer, as chief, hadn't much success, but kept a-plugging at things, and got along somehow.

"One of the horses that joined up at the organization was a big blue roan with a line back, rising seventeen hands, some cayuse in him, but mainly of American stock, and Kamul's corporal drew him for his mount.

"Now in the old days no American horse had any use for an Injin at all, but Dick was special so. First rattle on to the box he pret' near got a Nepercy, and the friendlies soon learned to shy one side when Dick was nigh. Doggone plug would rare and snort like a stud if an Injin was within a mile of him, and he was a plumb favoright for scouts and pickets, beating the videttes at locating a hostyle. Whole bunch could turn in and leave Dick to guard them, and he sure would. He would trumpet and squeal and paw dirt at first sign of a war whoop. Just naturally opposed to Injins.

"Well, the first rookus they got in, Dick got his Injin but brought his rider out of it plumb killed; then Kamul drew him, and he got shot up clean to —— and back. Several men tried him but every mother's son of them either got killed or wounded, but Dick generally managed to get an Injin and stomp him clean through to Chiny.

"It went along so for a right smart, while the men were getting skeered and skeerder of drawing Dick till a lootnant piffed them and tried his hand. Well, Dick took him into a fight and got another Injin, but the loot wasn't worth bringing back to camp so they planted him right there.

"After that men went to the guard-house for refusing Dick. Curry he roared like a bull; the officers scoffed and jeered; but you never noticed them a-taking Dick over; so the old fellow was put among the supernumer'ies and picketed on the side lines nights.

"Up to then he had been in forty-one fights, never even scratched himself, had gotten eight or ten Injins, leaving them plumb ruint, and every one of his different riders had eyether been killed or wounded.

"So along in the early part of the Winter of '63 Pulain started to ranykiboo, and Curry with about three hundred men and his Nepercy scouts under Gale went after him into the Blue Mountains —— "

"Sure! Dick' went along too; best sentry they had. Well, Curry called up a sergeant of E Company and said:

" 'Sergeant, you will have to ride Dick. I'm short of horses.'

" 'Colonel, you can break me, or confine me, but ride Dick in a scrap I will not, and that settles it.'

"Well, Curry didn't blame him any; but

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he had to make a bluff, so he up and says: " 'Now, sergeant, you are an intelligent man, superior to any of these superstitious beliefs, and besides, remember, it is time of war, and a refusal to obey an order is mutiny and punishable by death. You will ride Dick.'

"Coffee didn't like it; but he knew he had to obey and he knew he was a gone coon, so he answers back:

" 'All right, colonel. So long as the men and *all* the officers are skeered I'll do it, but I gotter have time to make my will first.'

"Curry got red and near bust at that 'all,' but all he said was:

" 'Very good, sergeant. Go and draw Dick."

"That night Gale got in reporting Pulain and a big bunch camped a half-day's travel away. So Curry rigged a mountain howitzer on muels and they up and started for the hostyle camp, reaching near there at daybreak, but on account of its being in a big cañon couldn't get within shooting distance; so Gale led them to a crossing about ten miles below.

"They crossed on improvised pontoons, and just as the last pontoon was swung across about two thousand bucks jumped them, sewing them up tight for three days. Dick, of course, got the blame.

"There was a little draw running back from where the soldiers were, and the scouts reported that the hostyles seemed to have overlooked it, so Curry resolved to send a bunch to hold it and escape that night through it.

"It was just Coffee's luck to be sent, and on Blue Dick with a detail he put out for the pass at the head of the draw.

" 'So long, fellers,' he called as they filed out. 'My will's made, and I'm a-riding Dick, so don't look to see me again.

"The top of the pass and a distance of several hundred yards was plainly in sight from where the troops were entrenched. Naturally they watched and observed the detachment emerging from the cañon. Just as the last man appeared he dropped from his horse. Another fell; and the detachment was thrown in confusion when a swarm of the reds boiled out of the timber and overwhelmed them.

"Coffee was one of the last to fall. As he struck the ground a red ran in and grabbed Dick's lines. The watching troops saw him rare, strike and whirl, kicking out behind in time to kick a second Injin's head in. A third he seized with his teeth, shook him like a rat, then dropped and stomped all over him. The hostyles for a moment drew back; then surged forward again in an effort to capture the critter, and recoiled again, for Dick, trumpeting like an angry stallion, raged and stormed among them, biting, kicking, striking until bristling with arrows and filled with a heap of lead, iron and stones from the trade muskets of the reds. The horse, with a scream that was heard at the entrenchment nearly half a mile away, threw himself at a bunch and fell, crushing several beneath him.

"Later when reenforced Curry went out by that same pass, and here's the funny part. —— if they hadn't honored that fighting devil as if he were a human, for as the troops passed by they saw that Dick had been scalped as neatly as hair was ever raised from a human being, and if any one doubts, well, the records of the War Department will give the story in greater detail than I have done."

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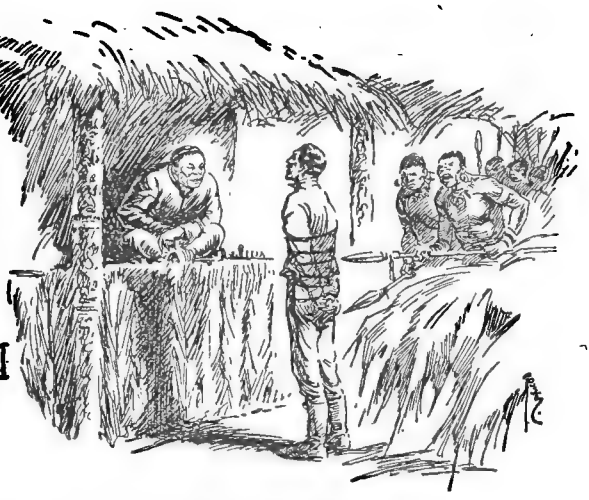
Bad Luck

by J. D. NEWSOM



Author of "The Odyssey of Chandar Roy," "The Naked Truth."

NOT every man can grin when things go wrong—grin and start again at the beginning with the same old enthusiasm. Those who can compass this feat usually go far along their chosen paths when their cycle of bad luck has swung full circle and their course at last sets toward success.

Ben Munson, however, strolling down George Street, Sydney, wasn't bothering about ultimate success or the virtue of determination. He was whistling "The Rosary" mournfully and tunelessly, to the annoyance of fellow pedestrians, while his mind concentrated on whether to spend his last fifteen shillings on one good meal at the Hotel Australia or be reasonable and buy a ticket to Melbourne, where he might find work.

Food, he decided, was essential and since he must eat—why not at the Australia where he would have one last amused look at fashionable society while enjoying a large and juicy porterhouse steak?

So he made his way through the gloomy portals of Sydney's leading caravanserai, through the red plush dignity of the lounge, to the lofty dining-room where a head waiter led him to a small table by the service door. It was bad luck, murmured the head-waiter, but all those other tables—he waved a fat hand at the cold, empty room—were reserved, engaged, retained.

"Bad luck!" commented Ben. "I know all about it. What I want to know is—have you any deviled oysters?"

The head waiter, who had guided him to the noisy corner because he was not dressed according to the latest style, gave a sigh of relief and produced an embossed menu card. He had had to deal with several returned soldiers, and some of them objected to the superior manners which he had acquired in the very best European hotels. Ben, closing his eyes, ordered deviled oysters and porterhouse steak and French fried and passion fruit and coffee all in one breath and sat back to await developments.

His bad luck might have bowed down an ordinary man, but a Western Australian is made of rugged stuff, hard to help or hinder. His last stroke of misfortune had been a fitting climax to a long series of unpleasant happenings. A flying shell fragment had caught him in the abdomen twenty-four hours before the armistice and after long months in a hospital he had been sent back to his native Australia. But the embarkation authorities had seen fit to send him to Sydney instead of Fremantle, which is at the other end of the continent, and what money he had not lost at poker on board ship had been stolen that morning by a pickpocket, who had fortunately left untouched the small change in Ben's trousers pocket.

Now he was a free man again, three thousand miles from his native grass lands, with a dwindling capital of fifteen shillings. Some day, of course, a grateful Government would hand him a bonus, but in the mean time he must find work and shelter.

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In stately procession came the deviled oysters, the porterhouse steak, the passion fruit, and the coffee. Ben ate largely and contentedly. The *cuisine* of the Hotel Australia lived up to its reputation, which had reached him years before when he was raising cattle near Port Darwin.

Bad luck, reflected Ben, had really begun to dog his footsteps in those far-away prewar days. At eighteen he had inherited his father's homestead at the back of beyond, fifty miles from his nearest white neighbor. He had done quite well, all alone, bossing a gang of black fellows, and had acquired an extensive knowledge of cattle and horses and water wells. Sometimes he visited his neighbor, a saturnine little man named McLaird, who taught him some of the things he still had to learn about bullocks and markets. They struck up a mute sort of friendship, which called for few words and satisfied them both.

The world, Ben decided as he drained his coffee and called for his bill, had treated him too well in those youthful days. He had been too darned pleased with himself.

The big drought, however, had knocked a little sense into his head—too late.

HE HAD met McLaird one blazing hot morning by a dried-up water hole.

"Guess I'll go south," said McLaird. "Better come with me. With luck we might get through to Kalgoorie."

Ben had smiled and shaken his head.

"Please yourself," he answered. "I'm going to Broome. It's nearer."

"There's not much water," suggested McLaird swinging into the saddle.

"I'll risk that," answered Ben. "Things can't be much worse than they are here. S'long."

He reached Broome—alone. The bones of his bullocks dotted the gray, dusty plains behind him. He paid off his black boys and tried his luck at pearl fishing.

This, too, ended disastrously when his partner, a German by the name of Schirmer, made off at night with their schooner, the *Vanua*, and disappeared. Ben sitting on the wharf, smoking his last cigaret, came to the conclusion that he was beginning to acquire experience and grow up. He had exactly two shillings to face the world with and he was hungry.

He hadn't minded that so much, he had decided, but if ever he laid hands on that Dutchman——

"Heard the news, mate?" an excited dockhand had suddenly queried. "Heard the news?"

"Naw," said Ben.

"Whole blooming world's gone mad!" gabbled the dockhand. "All Europe——"

"Then go see a doctor," advised Ben, sighing dismally as he threw away the butt end of his cigaret.

"War!" yelled the dockhand.

"Yes? Well, I might as well eat," answered Ben.

But the Italian waiters of the Greek restaurant had rushed out into the streets, and nobody cared whether he spent his last two shillings or not.

Ben soon had discovered that Germany's armies were tramping across Belgium, which was somewhere on the other side of the earth, and he joined the Australian Light Horse before the day was out.

The Powers that be made him a foot-soldier and sent him to New Guinea to subdue the German settlements there. In the course of time he became a sergeant and was given a detachment of native police from the Delta region to play about with. He wandered into strange by-ways, among tribes who knew nothing about the great war, but who took a great interest in his person. Incidentally, some of them tried to eat him in order to acquire his strength. He subdued their appetites, backed by twelve rifles.

At last he had been sent up the Kaiserin Augusta River to find a certain German who, refusing to surrender, devoted his time to sniping and raids and other disagreeable pursuits. Ben found him sitting on a hillock with a machine-gun and a score of savages all fighting for the Vaterland. After some elaborate stalking, a well-aimed bullet put the machine-gun out of action and more cautious stalking placed Ben's party in a commanding position. Their accurate fire destroyed most of the defenders' love for the remote Vaterland, but the German, left alone on a rocky hill-top in New Guinea, refused to surrender until his last round of ammunition had been expended and the Delta police were creeping in all about him. Even then he tried to fight with a clubbed rifle in his hands, but Ben tripped him most ingloriously from behind and sat on his back.

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The German cursed fluently in his native tongue and Ben recognized the voice although the words were quite wasted on him.

"Why Rudolph!" he murmured, patting the prisoner's head. "It's little old Schirmer come to life!"

He removed to a near-by rock and grinned good-naturedly at the astonished German, who sat up rubbing a round red lump on his forehead.

"I am your prisoner, Mr. Munson," he said stiffly.

"Oh, that's all right—but what about the *Vanua*," demanded Ben. "That was a dirty trick."

The captive shrugged his shoulders.

"I had no choice," he answered. "I was ordered to report to our nearest military base. Any other means of transport would have been too slow."

"Well, I suppose that's as good an excuse as any. But why pinch my boat? There were lots of others in the harbor."

"Fate," answered Schirmer, regaining a certain amount of confidence.

"Fate, my hat. But that's all over now. I'm supposed to be a soldier, and you certainly look like one in that outfit. We're happy old enemies. Now I'll have to take you back as a prisoner of war and you can tell me where the schooner is."

Schirmer stood up and clicked his heels as he saluted.

"I have no choice," he said.

Ben still squatting on the rocks burst out into peals of laughter.

"You don't know how funny you are, and me too. All this business of saluting and parading in brass buttons. Well, we'd better be on our way." He gulped and wiped his eyes. "I'm going to put you on parole so you won't have to be chained up."

"I am sorry," answered the German. "I cannot give you my parole."

"Keep it, keep it," retorted Ben. "But let's talk about the *Vanua*. When the war's over, why can't we get together again. After all you have a half-share in the boat."

Which goes to show that he still had a lot to learn.

The German clucked impatiently, for the war was a very real thing to him.

"You must understand," he insisted, "I give no parole. If I can escape and rejoin my country's forces——"

"Oh, all right," grunted Ben only half-listening. "Have it your own military way. Just be sociable and stop playing soldiers."

So the following night Schirmer had struck his sleeping captor over the head with a scabbard and escaped into the wilderness again. He was heard of once or twice in the Massim district away off to the east, then out in New Ireland, but he evaded pursuit and ceased to be of any interest to the Colonial authorities.

Ben recovered from his injuries in time to be sent to France, in time to be wounded——

"Twelve shillings an' seexpence. Sank you, Sair," murmured the waiter.

"Oh, yes," said Ben coming back to earth. "Of course, and here's another sixpence for yourself. That leaves me with, two bob.

"More than ever like old times," he added to himself as he made his way out of the now crowded dining-room. "If only I had the *Vanua* now, I could sell the old tub——"

Abruptly he ceased thinking about the schooner, for in the lobby he tripped over the feet of his old neighbor, McLaird, who expressed no surprize and turned out to be as saturnine, bald and blue-eyed as ever.

They renewed their interrupted acquaintance smoothly and without any apparent break.

"Get through with your cows?" asked McLaird, his eyes roving about the lobby where Sydney's smart folk ape their British cousins.

"Fizzle—cleaned me out," grunted Ben. "Tried pearling off Broome. Swindled. Went to war. Just got back. How'd you make out?"

"Oh, I scraped through somehow. Then I tried to enlist. They wouldn't have me—too short. I'm running a station out in New Caledonia for some Melbourne people." He looked at Ben with questioning eyes. "You don't fit in to this environment. You've strayed a whole lot, haven't you?"

There came a pause while they listened to the high-pitched voice of an over-dressed lady telling her escort that "My dear, this war has simply destroyed every vestige of decency. We're growing so common!"

"Hear that?" commented Ben, wrinkling his long nose. "I certainly have strayed. This is as far from home as Flanders."

"Who are you working for?" asked McLaird.

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"Not working," answered Ben still smiling at the over-dressed lady's back.

McLaird leaned forward, elbows on knees and seemed to address the carpet beneath his feet.

"I need an assistant out in New Caledonia. Got a native overseer, but he's too lazy. I was told to pick my own man. Don't know anybody in this town. Want to come?"

"When do we start?" laughed Ben.

FROM the beginning they worked in perfect harmony, for Ben Munson fitted into McLaird's scheme of things without effort. Their methods, their speech, their mannerisms were the products of the same up-bringing and called for no labored explanations.

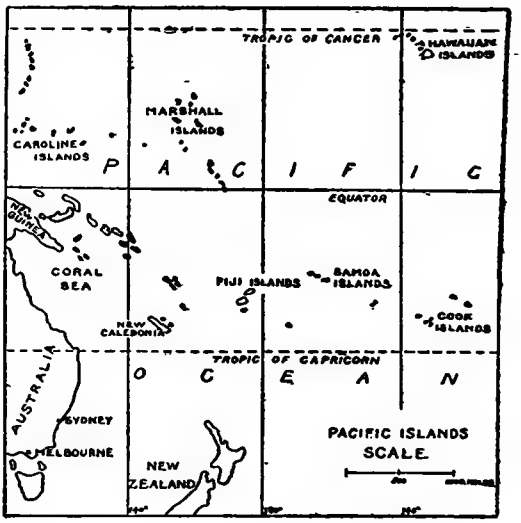
In Western Australia the cattle had been herded on the flat open grass lands; in New Caledonia they were tucked away in valleys between great hills which reminded Ben of New Guinea, otherwise the daily routine varied but little. There were the same black fellows to ration and pay, the same horses to break in and train, the same drives and round-ups, and the same blazing sunshine always overhead.

The homestead at Nakitalo stood on a slight rise within a mile of the blue Pacific. Mango and palm trees surrounded the house, and a former owner had laid out an elaborate garden, which McLaird had allowed to run wild. From the windows of the living-room one could look down on to the huts of the native settlement, and the whitewashed walls of the local police station could be seen in the distance. Behind the house the long green valley ran back between steep slopes, and in the distance towered the peaks of the central mountain chain which runs like a spine the whole length of the island.

After the day's work they would read and smoke in the living-room facing the sea. Sometimes they would talk, but as a rule the rats scuttling about in the ceiling squeaked and played undisturbed.

Then one night in March after a day of moist, heavy heat, came the rain. It advanced off the ocean in a solid wall, and its roar could be heard long minutes before the first heavy drops beat down on the iron roofs of the out-houses.

McLaird laid down his beloved Sydney *Herald* with a sigh.



"Better close up, I suppose."

He glanced out at the inky blackness, listening to the swelling sound of the coming downpour. A gust of moist air made the light waver and grow dim, and he slammed the window shut.

"Hello!" he called out. "See that, Ben?"

"Nope," answered Munson, shielding the lamp from the freshening breeze. "What's the trouble?"

"Thought I saw something," said McLaird, bolting the last frame into place.

The wind and the rain smothered his voice and he stood looking out into the night. "I'm almost sure——" he began.

"You're right," shouted Ben above the clamorous rain. "Look!"

A face, like some blurred, distorted vision in a dream, peered in at the window. Something had happened to its lips and nose, and wet hair hung down over wild eyes. The face was pressed up against the window pane and a dreadful, wide open mouth seemed to be begging, imploring.

But not a sound reached the two men standing in the room and they stood quite still until the face dropped down out of sight.

McLaird came to life first.

"Some poor devil," he shouted, and jumped to the door. "Mind the lamp!" he called back and hurried out into the howling night. He returned bearing in his arms a Thing, a wreck of a man, that moaned and cried and trembled even when they had put it to bed and forced brandy down its throat.

"Whee," whistled McLaird as he propped

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up the filthy head on a clean pillow where the matted hair and beard sprawled like some unclean thing. "I wonder who mauled you like that."

For a while the Thing whimpered and shook until it opened its eyes and saw McLaird. Then it spoke in a thin voice.

"I saw the light," it whimpered. "Saw the light—shining——"

The voice trailed off into a quivering, almost inaudible whisper, until a tremor shook the body and it spoke aloud again, gulping hysterically.

"Hundreds of them squatting in the shadows looking at me. And I lost, so they took me— Oh!" He shuddered and his teeth chattered. "They killed Lamarque—slowly. I heard him shriek just once before he died. D'you know Lamarque? No? I met him in the Banks, on Merig, I believe it was."

The sound of the beating rain filled the room until he went on:

"He was a fine fellow, but that shriek of his. God, it nearly drove me mad. I *am* mad I suppose. Mister, if you ever come to Hamburg——"

A veil crept over the wreck's eyes and a thing that had been a hand, there was only a fragment of a thumb left, pawed at the air.

"They caught me when I tried to run," he moaned. "Have you ever been touched by twenty pairs of hands all at once? And they—and those drums beating all night—they twisted Lamarque's head right off, like a rotten cork. A rotten cork. And then——"

The wreck fell back on to the pillow, gasped, twitched and lay still, unconscious at last.

"What d'you make of it, Mac?" said Ben, who had gone quite white beneath his tan.

"He's been tortured, of course," answered McLaird busily biting his thumbnail. "Tortured. But they don't do that out here. They're not civilized enough. They don't mutilate their victims. Kanakas just club a man over the head when they're not feeling friendly. I've never heard of anything like this! Guess I'll call in the *gendarme*."

The latter arrived some hours later, wet and bedraggled. He was a big, voluble Méridional who loved his khaki uniform and the sound of the medals clinking on his chest. His liking for McLaird was tinged with asperity because the little Australian refused to understand French whenever it suited his purpose.

"*Sapristi!*" he exclaimed when he saw the Thing. "It is not possible that this should happen in New Caledonia. Monsieur McLaird, you know the tribes as well as I do. None of them would do this."

He clenched his fists and shook them at the imaginary foe.

"If ever I catch the criminal—the guillotine for him. The guillotine at daybreak in front of the prison gates at Nouméa. But that is too good, too swift. *Le pauvre malheureux!*"

Then the official in him conquered his indignation.

"I must make my report," he said. "Headquarters must be informed immediately. His name, Monsieur McLaird?"

McLaird told him what little he knew, and the *gendarme* scribbled furiously until the Thing, moaning, recovered consciousness. It caught sight of Ben standing at the foot of the bed.

"Ben Munson," it whispered. "Ben come back for the *Vanua*. They've got the boat. I ran her down through the Solomons after the war. Lamarque came with me——"

A film spread over its eyes, the voice became dull and colorless.

"Lamarque—if you'd seen him. How he screamed when that devil—Ben, he's got a yellow face and the skin's drawn tight across the forehead. I won twice. I lost my nerve after that. They'd just pulled out Lamarque—pulled him out——"

He caught sight of the *gendarme* and cried out weakly.

"Just like that," he moaned. "Same uniform." He gulped and sat up. "I'm going out," he said very slowly and deliberately. "If you do see him, steer clear, Ben, go wide," and he toppled over sidewise while his soul rasped and rattled in his throat as it jerked clear of his mangled body.

"Schirmer," muttered Ben. "It's Schirmer."

WHEN the gray blurred dawn came into the skies they buried the Thing at the end of the garden beneath a dripping mango tree.

"Those wounds were still fresh," mused Munson when they reentered the house.

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"And he said something about a man with a yellow face."

"Does Monsieur Munson know the deceased?" asked the *gendarme* addressing McLaird in French.

"They met in New Guinea," answered McLaird, omitting all encumbering details of name and place.

"Ha! A search shall be made," the official declared.

"You might ask him if he knows a fellow with a yellow face, Mac," put in Munson.

"No," the *gendarme* solemnly shook his head.

He didn't know of such a person. There were plenty of Javanese coolies, of course. Perhaps the victim had been assailed on some other island, in the Hebrides—Tanna or Malikolo, perhaps.

"Is there any place nearer than that?" questioned McLaird.

"There is Sulava, but there are no Javanese there," answered the *gendarme*. "But wait. There is Yandep where Makawi is chief."

Makawi, it appeared, was a half-breed, the offspring of a Chinese mother and a Kanaka father. Makawi was yellowish. But Yandep was eighteen miles away and Makawi was a good chief.

"Why, Monsieur Mac Laird," exclaimed the official, "Makawi reports to me twice a year. He is one of my best chiefs. And intelligent! He was sent to Nouméa to be educated! No suspicion can attach to him—and nobody ever goes to Yandep.

"Now I must make out my report. Do not trouble, we shall find the culprit."

But Ben was not satisfied.

"He pinched the *Vanua*," he grumbled as they ate their belated breakfast, "but he certainly could fight with the best of 'em. I kind of liked that fellow. And I'd like to find the *Vanua*," he added as an afterthought.

"Nothing much to do here for a few days," said McLaird. "The rain is stopping—let's run over to Yandep and look around."

"How are we going to get over?" asked Ben, suddenly taking a fresh interest in life.

"There's the motor launch. And if we see any trace of your boat that'll be sufficient evidence."

"Say, if I can lay hands on the man," said Ben stretching his long arms above his head.

"Forget that," warned McLaird. "Don't get excited too soon."

"And that boat must be worth three hundred odd pounds even now," Munson added irrelevantly.

That afternoon they found the remains of a rude raft on the beach, but the *gendarme* was apathetic.

"Some coolies committed the outrage," he insisted. "I vouch for Makawi."

"*Oui?*" drawled McLaird.

But the next day the motor launch left Nakitalo, crept through the intricacies of the bar and headed for Yandep, whose one peak was just discernible above the western horizon.

"If the *gendarme* sees us he'll blow up and arrest us when we get back," chuckled McLaird.

"I wonder whether Schirmer wrecked the *Vanua?*" Munson asked of the blue sky.

He was really a sentimental youth trying hard to conceal the fact that he had been very much shocked by the German's death. Even if Schirmer had robbed him and all but killed him, he had been a stout fighter.

"*Nggosul*" suddenly cried one of the native boys. "Shoal water!"

They were within sight and sound of the reef surrounding Yandep. It was a delightful island, cool and green, fringed with coconut palms, ringed with white sands, running up inland to a flat-topped mountain all covered in dense bush and foliage. On the foreshore a group of natives were shoving a long canoe into the water.

"We'll run along outside the reef," said McLaird. "We might find a break somewhere."

Ben, sitting on the roof of the tiny cabin, whistled "The Rosary" as tunelessly as ever. Slowly the motor launch skirted the coast; the strip of beach with its jostling natives disappeared around a bend and Munson suddenly let out a yell.

"Look over there, Mac! They've got the *Vanua*. See her? She's up that inlet. See her mast sticking up above those trees?"

McLaird shut off the engine.

"I see it," he assented. "But how d'you know it's your boat?"

"How do I know?" cried Ben. "Hasn't she got a red mast? I painted it myself. Couldn't tell my own boat otherwise. I'm no sailor."

"That settles it," said McLaird. "We'd

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better go back now and tell our friend the gendarme."

"What?" shouted Ben. "I want to get the fellow who killed Schirmer and get him quick. The dirty dog."

He had quite forgotten the *Vanua* now, and his eyes blazed as he thought of the mangled wreck that had once been a man.

"And if you go back," he went on breathlessly, "that policeman will wait for help from Nouméa and we'll be left out of it. I tell you, I want to——"

"So do I," assented McLaird. "But look here, Ben, did you notice that crowd of Kanakas on the beach? There's just two of us. It's a big handful. We've got to get ashore, pick out our man, spirit him on board and get clear without having that whole pack on our backs. If we shoot the fellow on the spot and run we'll go to jail. You know what it means to tamper with the tribes."

Ben wrinkled his nose thoughtfully.

"Diplomacy," he suggested with a grin. "We're tourists, Mac. We go ashore all in good faith. Then we can pick up clues and all that."

"It's a crazy notion," sighed McLaird, but he started the engine again.

They found a break in the coral barrier soon afterward and made their way back toward the beach.

"Keep the launch just clear of the sands," McLaird instructed the boy at the wheel. "We'll wade ashore, understand?"

The boy nodded his head, watching the gathering throng with frightened eyes.

The native canoe had drawn abreast of them.

"Ho!" called out one of the paddlers. "Is the white chief from Nakitalo with you?"

"Tell him no," answered McLaird when the boy had translated the message.

Thereafter not a word was spoken, not a cry, not a sound, until the two white men slipped over the side of the launch and splashed out on to the dry sand.

"This doesn't seem quite right," commented Ben, who did not feel like a tourist and was tugging at his holster.

The crowd of natives, black Melanesians with mops of frizzly hair, closed in about them and swayed forward step by step, still in absolute silence. The sun of late afternoon made the whole scene seem unreal to Munson. He wanted to laugh at the set faces before him, yet he felt oddly aware that they were waiting just for some little sign.

The voice of one of the boys in the launch shattered the silence.

"O, Master," he cried, "come back, come——"

He never finished, for the launch had been boarded by the paddlers and the boys died, screaming.

"Keep 'em off," ordered McLaird as the crowd with a long-drawn "Ha" of satisfaction closed in about them.

Here and there an arm thrust out above the throng, tried to reach forward more quickly.

"Let 'em have it," sighed McLaird in a low voice. "Keep close and work around to the right toward your schooner."

A queer, nightmare of a fight ensued. They both fired into the seething mass which pressed in on them with outstretched arms which strove to grasp, to hold, to strangle.

Munson's ammunition gave out first and they started to run in the loose, clinging sand. Just before they reached the shelter of some bushes a hand caught Ben by the shoulder. He whirled about and struck blindly with the butt end of his revolver. Another pair of hands gripped his arm, and all at once he was caught, smothered, unable to move. In the distance he heard McLaird fire once, and then again—and then silence.

"IT IS unfortunate you do not speak French," chuckled Makawi, squatting cross-legged on a mat. "I could be more—more——"

"Explicit," suggested Ben.

"That is it exactly—explicit." Makawi rubbed his thin hands together. "A kind missionary taught me English many years ago."

He leered and a thin trickle of saliva, running down his chin, fell drop by drop onto his scarlet tunic. His eyes seemed to smolder beneath heavy, puffed lids, and except for the forehead where the skin was stretched taut across the bones, the face was gross, heavy and creased.

"He's as mad as a hatter," thought Ben, who sat before Makawi with his arms bound to his sides.

He had been thrown into a hut the night before and guarded by a score of wide-awake natives. Escape had been out of the

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question. At dawn they had brought him water and fruit and had taken him down through the village—the usual group of round, thatched huts—to an open space where Makawi awaited him, resting at ease beneath an awning of palm leaves supported on carved pillars. By the chief's side kneeled a boy preparing kava in a big wooden bowl.

"Tell me this," insisted Ben. "What's happened to my friend?"

"Ah!" murmured Makawi. "Who knows? I should like to see him. Until he is found I can do very little."

"Do what?" asked Ben whose tongue seemed unable to articulate properly in his dry mouth.

"Our amusements are few," leered Makawi. "My people," he indicated the circle of natives out in the sunshine, "are bored to tears—that is good English, eh?" He cackled shrilly. "The Reverend Barnes taught me that expression. A very fine gentleman the Reverend Barnes. When I was his cook I gained an extensive English vocabulary."

Now Ben Munson knew very little about maniacs and usually cared still less. All he knew at the moment was that he was being leered at by a half-breed Chink who had tortured Schirmer and would probably do the same to him. And McLaird had managed to escape. Ben felt vaguely annoyed at this. Moreover, he had spent a miserable night in a stuffy hut and his arms and back were beginning to ache intolerably.

"I don't know what your game is," he said. "But don't forget we came over from Nakitalo. You know the *gendarme* over there."

Makawi's eyes became narrow slits and he swayed forward as he spoke.

"The *gendarme* trusts me, my good young man. If he make inquiry of Makawi, then I say: Foolish men get drowned trying to land. The *gendarme* always trusts me—and if he didn't he would die.

"At this season we must propitiate our heathen gods—such visits as yours are timely, most timely."

"Yes, and suppose my friend gets back?" asked Ben, trying to repress his disgust for the bloated face.

"He will *not* get back. He will be here quite, quite soon. A dangerous man that. He killed seven of my people. He shall die and you shall watch closely. It will be quite a novel affair—as the Reverend Barnes used to say.

"There is one question I must ask you. I was taught chess by my master, and I have no opportunities to play. Do you know this delightful pastime?"

Ben had once seen a chess board in use on the transport going to France, but he always declared that the game was "beyond him." He stalled for time.

"I know a little about it," he answered.

"That is very fine indeed. To-night we shall play three games. My people think the game has some mystical significance. If you lose you will amuse them a little longer. They have a silly superstition that a captive's soul is of some use to them at this time of year when they plant their yams." He shrugged his shoulders. "My mother, who venerated the teacher Lao Tse, instructed me differently and the Reverend Barnes gave me another set of beliefs. I am quite well educated."

He turned his head as half a score of panting warriors pressed through the throng and halted before him. He listened to them in silence, his head drooping on his right shoulder, while his fingers clawed at his loose lower lip. At last he waved them away and turned again to Munson.

"They can not find your companion," he snarled. "So you will have to take his place tonight."

Again he became genial, the benign look returned to his eyes, and Ben had the impression that he was watching a demoniacal impersonation of the Reverend gentleman who had nurtured Makawi.

"First of all," said the chief, "you will play chess with me and my people shall watch and appreciate my skill. Then, my very good young friend, I shall see myself obliged to hand over your soul to my people.

"I have developed quite original methods of releasing this soul which my simple people seem to relish and fear. For instance—" and he expatiated at length while Ben grew sick and white.

Once he tried to work his arms free from the bonds which were biting into his skin, but Makawi held up a warning hand.

"Struggle is futile," he said. "There is no possible escape. As I was saying, when the small bones in the hand have been laid bare——"

Ben listened, breathing hard through his nostrils, praying that he might have one

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chance to lay hands on that loose throat. Outside in the sunshine the crowd of natives gossiped and lounged, while their women, on the outskirts of the throng, yelled and hooted at the captive.

The day wore on. Makawi ordered food and drink, talking incessantly, gloatingly, asking Munson a hundred times whether his English was not "quite, quite good."

MEANWHILE, out in the bush on the very outskirts of the village, lay McLaird, flat on his stomach beneath a slab of rock where a heap of skulls bleached in the sun. He had spent the night there, cramped and miserable, cursing himself for his rashness.

"At my time of life, too," he grumbled. "Bless my soul, I should have known better. If I can get Ben out of this I'll make him sit up. Poor old Ben. Him and his darned German pal."

Later when the ants discovered him, he crawled out from beneath his shelter and wormed his way with infinite caution toward the nearest hut.

Fate decreed that the hut should have been the home of a warrior recently deceased, and his body according to local custom had been removed through a hole knocked in the back of the house—for it is against the law to carry a dead body across the threshold of a dwelling. Moreover, after such an event the hut is no longer used, and through this opening McLaird crept into the dark interior.

Queer soft things ran over him, cobwebs clung to his face, but he took up a position by the fallen door post and looked out on to the open space in the center of the village.

Occasionally through the shifting crowd he caught sight of Ben and Makawi, sometimes he heard the chief's shrill voice and his desperation increased.

"How the deuce can I get to him?" he muttered. "What am I going to do?"

Then the shadows began to lengthen, the short tropical twilight faded, and the fires glowed redly in the dark. Somewhere at the other end of the village a drum began to beat, deep, throbbing, ominous.

Women planted great pine wood torches about the open space which became full of dancing red lights and black shadows. The crowd was strangely silent. The noise of the drum stopped abruptly.

Clearly in the hush McLaird heard the half-mad voice of Makawi saying: "Now my dear young friend, we shall play our first game. Your arms are to be freed. Tuduwa will watch over you with his club should you contemplate causing a ruction—my vocabularly is still plentiful, is it not?"

"But, you old fool," snapped Ben, "I can't play. Even if I could, d'you think I'd play with you?"

"For that insult you shall live five minutes longer," cackled Makawi. "You will suffer admirably well."

McLaird clenched his jaws to keep from crying out.

"What am I going to do?" he repeated.

A breeze sprang up, making the torches smoke and gutter.

"I move the king's pawn out two squares," he heard Makawi say and Ben's answer reached him sharp and unabashed.

"Move it to Heaven, but when I meet you on the coals——"

"Got it!" murmured McLaird. "It's just a chance."

He crept out of the hut by the funerary exit and away into the blackness. Minutes passed.

Makawi in high glee moved his pieces and those of his opponent. He secured a fool's mate.

"Now the second game. Your turn for the white," said the chief. "A splendid game, as the Reverend Barnes used to call it. Bother those lights!" The restless wind again made the shadows dance and swirl. "I shall have to propitiate——"

He paused, his dripping mouth wide open.

"What's that?" he shrieked. "O, Mbaloma"—this to a nearby native—"the huts burn!"

Ben saw the glare shoot up into the sky, saw the flames and sparks leap from hut to hut. The crowd watched spell-bound. Then a thing of sparks and flame catapulted into the throng which scattered with howls of dismay.

Makawi tottered to his feet mumbling, "Lao, O, Lao!"

Ben had wrenched the club from his guard's hands and stood towering above the chief as McLaird, a flaming torch in each hand, came on at a run.

"Grab him," he yelled. "Knock him, quick. Here, I'll carry him. Take the gun."

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They fled beneath a shower of sparks and blazing, falling thatch palm leaves, bearing the body of the stunned Makawi.

Once Ben stumbled and nearly fell.

"My arms," he cried, "I can't hold 'em up."

"Get on," ordered McLaird. "And don't lose that gun."

On the dark beach they found their motor launch hauled up on the sand just above the water line.

"They're coming," said Ben.

"Let 'em come," retorted McLaird. "Brace up, boy. Put your shoulder here if you can't use your arms."

Inch by inch the launch slipped back into the water and they floated out on to the still Pacific just before the swarming natives reached the beach. A spear whistled overhead in the darkness as the engine after a convulsive splutter settled down to its appointed task.

"We'll keep inside the reef until the moon comes up," said McLaird. "Just sit on that Johnny's face if he starts anything. I don't think those niggers will put to sea in the dark."

"Shame we can't get the *Vanua*," murmured Ben, again thinking of his lost boat.

A MONTH later, as the golden rays of the sun sprang clear of the gray dawn clouds, the heavy doors of the Nouméa prison swung open, creaking slightly.

A small group of men emerged and hurried toward the red-armed guillotine, stark and hard against the clear, morning light.

A priest raised a crucifix aloft; a tremor ran through the ranks of soldiers holding back the huddled onlookers; an official in top hat and tricolor sash hurriedly read a few words from the paper which he held in a shaking hand.

"In the name of the French Republic," he began.

There came a rattle, a scream, a rush of hurtling steel.

"That's the end of Makawi," whispered Ben Munson, gripping hard on McLaird's arm and turning his head away. "I'm going to leave the *Vanua* just where it is—to rot."

CAMELS IN THE U. S.

by Frank H. Huston

IN 1856 Jeff Davis, while Secretary of War, introduced camels into the arid regions of the Southwest; the first lot of fifty animals arriving in Texas and being distributed among the posts along the line from "Santoue" to El Paso del Norte.

In the following year forty more arrived, and were used by the military throughout what is now Arizona and New Mexico.

The first tests held during rainy, muddy weather were very successful, and it was believed the transportation problem of the "Great American Desert" was solved, but dry weather lessened the enthusiasm over the supposed conquering of the desert, the stones and rocks cutting the spongy pads that form the animals' feet to shreds, and their use was reluctantly abandoned, as no means of affording protection was found —shoeing, as in stock, being impossible.

The animals were gathered in herds, principally in Arizona, guarded by Government employees when, the Civil War opening, and the herders becoming careless, the animals strayed and were dispersed all over the desert regions.

As late as the early '80s their tracks were to be observed around the water-holes, and prospectors reported seeing and killing individual animals, but by that date they had been nearly exterminated as the Apache early developed a taste for camel-steak. A few were seen near Fort Stanton, N. M., in 1879—80 but, excepting strays from the few carried to Trinidad, Colorado, no authentic account of them may be had after about 1882 or '83. Even today an occasional prospector will come into the camps and settlements with a wild-eyed tale of his burros stampeded by the uncouth gray shambling beasts, but his audience wink gravely at each other observing under their breaths, "*Marahuana*," or plain, "Sun dippy."

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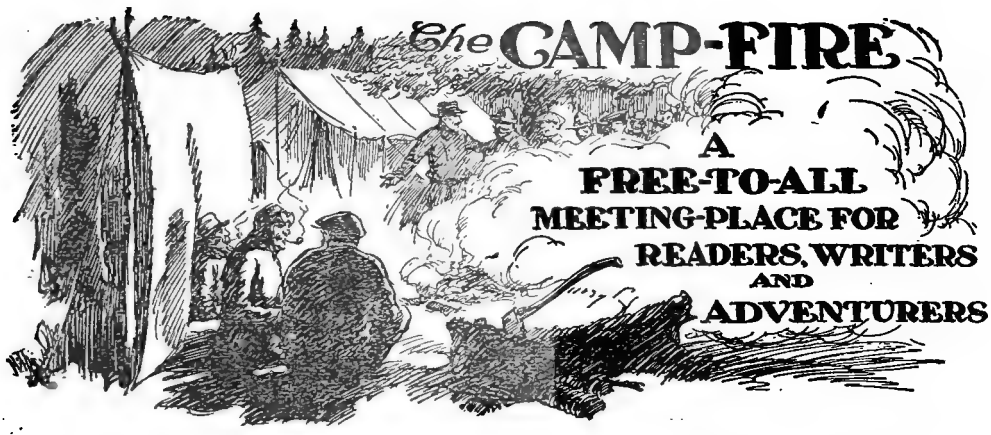

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THE many readers who were so particularly interested in "Barehanded Castaways," by J. Allan Dunn and expressed their wish for a sequel to that story will be glad to know that this sequel will be published in our October 30th issue, probably under the title "The Island."

THIS is why our Camp-Fire Station at Constantinople is no longer listed. Can Camp-Fire help forgiving a comrade for wandering?

And something about Navy ratings. You'll remember the discussion about "jimmy-legs."

U. S. S. Trinity, At Sea, *en route* Gibraltar.

It happened that I got transferred away from Constantinople just at the time the *Adventure* published my letter and announced the informal Station. First, though, this is at my own request, though suddenly carried into effect, due to desire to *move* again.

I regret inability to secure on short notice any one to fill my place as informal or to assume formal duties as a Camp-Fire Station. Should any of you attempt to see me there subsequent to the publication of the notice, please of all things do be easy in your opinion of my sudden move.

THE master-at-arms was officially abolished with the exception of some few of the older chiefs, "jimmy-legs," as stated by Mr. Horn. But even still more recently, last Summer, the rate was finally abolished for good and all. There was one at Constantinople on the *Scorpion* at that time, but he as well as the rest have now been compelled to change their ratings to some other branch. Mr. Horn might possibly be interested in knowing that a few new ones have been placed on the map: blacksmith 1st and 2nd, and similarly in coppersmith; 3 classes of sailmakers' mate; three classes of

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ship fitter, three classes of printer; chief storekeeper; oiler abolished and engineman substituted with two classes, 1st and 2nd; rating of signalman in place of quartermaster(s), torpedoeman and range finder operator, latter new rating; and of course various aviation designations new to all of us.—J. D. MONTGOMERY.

ONE of you sends in the following printed slip:

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Buckley, in search of adventure, are endeavoring to make a twenty-two-hundred-mile trip by water in a 19-foot canoe and do agree to mail me, for the payment of 25 cents, an account of their adventure for 30 days of their trip. This is to be mailed within 60 days of date.....
.....Signed.....

Address care of Adventure Magazine
Spring and Macdougal Streets.
New York City.

This particular slip is dated July 19, 1920, and signed with the name Ray Buckley. Several others have written us concerning this enterprise. We agree, "assuming no responsibility, to act as a forwarding address" for any of our readers. Such use of our office does not establish any connection other than that of reader and magazine. Mr. and Mrs. Buckley have no other connection with *Adventure*. Our editorial department has no outside representatives other than our "A.A." authorities; if it ever sends out any they will have due credentials, as will any representatives of any department of the magazine. Aside from such data as printed above we have no knowledge of Mr. and Mrs. Buckley or their trip.

IN CONNECTION with his complete novel in this issue Talbot Mundy tells us about the Great Pyramid. How much did those old Egyptian priests know?

This story is founded not on one fact but on scores of them. A wealthy American girl was abducted during the time I was in Egypt; the motive was said to be blackmail, but the culprits were caught in the act and "put through it" by the British, there being more than one reason at the time, including the lady's own expressed wish, why punishment, if any, should be administered without publicity.

KHUFU'S real tomb has never been found, so far as anybody knows, and almost the only generally recognized clue to its possible whereabouts is that short account given by Herodotus of a legend current in his day.

As to the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, volumes have been written about it, and dozens more could be written. The theories advanced in explanation of it are countless. The only people who continue to believe at this day that it was actually a Pharaoh's tomb are the dry-as-dust historians and some of the guide-book writers. All are agreed, however, that its measurements and plan have a signification whose key has been lost.

THE only inscriptions inside it are certain quarry marks on the great stones that form the so-called chambers of construction above the King's Chamber, but there is not one single stone or measurement in the whole titanic edifice that does not seem to point to a scientific purpose, although that purpose continues in dispute.

This much is certain: whoever built the pyramid knew a lot more in many ways than do our modern scientists. Here are a few facts. It is the only building in the world that is oriented exactly to the four points of the compass. Its measurements, extended, give the weight of the world in tons and the mean distance between the earth and sun in miles. Its base is an exact fraction of the diameter of the earth from pole to pole—to be exact, the ten-millionth part of the earth's semi-axis. It stands within a few feet of the exact center of the earth's habitable area, and in all likelihood is only those few feet out of place because the rock on which it stands is necessary to its foundations. Its descending passage points upward exactly toward the Pole Star. Its inside temperature is exactly the mean between the boiling and freezing points of water at that level. Its dimensions are said to solve the problem of the squaring of the circle; and, strangely enough, it appears to establish the scientific basis of the English gallon measure and the English inch, as against the so-called metric measure.

THE great coffer, which was the only thing ever found inside the pyramid, has exactly the same dimensions as those of the Jewish Ark of the Covenant. It was certainly never anybody's coffin, and could never have been intended for that purpose, for one reason because it is too big to have been brought in through any of the passages and therefore must have been put in there before the Pyramid was finished. It was empty when the first explorers succeeded in breaking in after months of effort, and nobody can have possibly been in ahead of them, for the reason given in this story, *viz.*, that the only ascending passage was blocked up with loose stones that came rolling down on the intruders and had to be removed one by one before they could enter.

And that points to another problem. How were those stones put in there? They must have been rolled in from above. Therefore there must be another opening somewhere in the upper courses that has not yet been discovered. And that helps to confirm a theory (which I have made *Chu Chi Ying* propound in the story) that somewhere up above the so-called King's Chamber there will be found yet another chamber. And the fragments of porphyry and diorite found in the dump-heaps left by the pyramid-builders lead one to suppose that the undiscovered chamber is lined with that kind of stone.

THE diagram given herewith is taken from "A Miracle in Stone," by Joseph A. Seiss, D. D., a book that is not easy to get, because, although it is to be found in the catalogues of most of the big libraries, for some reason it is always "missing" when

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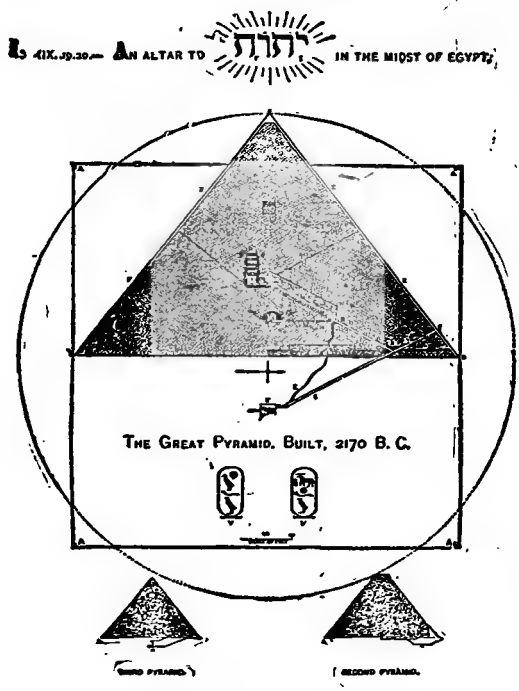
applied for. However, it can be purchased from at least one bookseller. In that diagram will be seen the supposed chamber that has not yet been discovered.

The theory given in this story, I believe, is original. It is an attempt to link up legend with scientific fact, and to explain for the sake of the story what possibly became of Khufu's treasure.



Indications on the Diagram

A, A, A, A, The square outline and corner sockets of the Pyramid's base.

B, B, B, Pyramid cut in half, viewed from the east, to show interior.

C, C, C, Entrance passage, pointing to what was then the pole star, Alpha Draconis, at its lower culmination, 2170 B. C.

D, D, First ascending passage.

E, E, E, The well, a tortuous opening down to lower end of entrance tube.

F, The subterranean chamber, not finished.

G, G, G, Native rock, squared but left standing.

H, Horizontal passage, to Queen's Chamber.

I, Sabbatic or Queen's Chamber.

J, Grand niche in Queen's Chamber.

K, K, Ventilating tubes to Queen's Chamber.

L, Grand Gallery, 28 feet high and 1882 inches long.

M, M, M, Rampstones, incisions, and vertical settings along the side of Grand Gallery's base.

N, Great step at south end of Grand Gallery.

O, Granite leaf in anteroom to King's Chamber.

P, P, Anteroom to King's Chamber.

Q, King's Chamber, or chief known room.

R, Grand Coffer in King's Chamber, fine granite, finely polished.

S, S, S, S, S, Chambers of construction above main chamber.

T, T, Ventilating tubes to Main or King's Chamber.

U, Supposed undiscovered Chamber.

V, V, Cartouches of the two Kings, Shufu and Nem-Shufu, otherwise called Cheops or Suphis, and Sen-Suphis or Noh-Suphis, under whose co-regency the Grand Pyramid was built, from quarry-marks painted on the stones.

W, W, Sections of next two pyramids, showing their interior openings, and the absence of any upward passages, which proves them to be imitations, the upward passages in Great Pyramid having been closed up by its builders, and unknown until about 1000 years ago.

X, X, Al Mamoun's forced passage, about A. D. 825, by which the upward passages and rooms were first discovered.

Y, times-marks of the building of the Pyramid, 2170 inches back of the floor-lines from the beginning of the Grand Gallery.

Z, Z, Z, Z, Casing-stones, now gone, quarried off by the Muslims.

☞ The dotted circular line drawn to the radius of the Great Pyramid's vertical height, shows the squaring of the circle, the length of that line being the same as the four sides of the Pyramid's base, proving the edifice built to the mathematical "pi" proportion.

☞ The shading in crossed lines indicates what parts of the Pyramid are red granite; the other portions, as far as known, are of a species of limestone, of a color approaching yellow-white.

☞ By the use of a magnifier the lettering and indications on the diagram will be brought out in ample distinctness.

MANY of the men who have written books about the Pyramid believe it to be prophetic, and the deductions they draw from its measurements are possibly fabulous but indubitably interesting. They are *at least* as plausible, however, as the assertions of the "authorities," who keep on claiming in the face of obvious facts that the Pyramid of Gizeh was never anything but a tomb. The truth is that it might be almost anything except a tomb. The other pyramids *are* tombs. The Great Pyramid is different in ten thousand ways from all the others.

Some even say that the Prophet Job built it, and that he and Melchizidech were the same person. However, the more you study what is known of the Mysteries of the ancient Egyptian priests, the more it appears possible that the Great Pyramid was a symposium of their knowledge, stated, as it were, in code with the idea of preventing any but initiates, from understanding, yet at the same time of preserving the secrets for all ages to come. It is certainly the most interesting, and by an infinite distance the most scientific, building in the world.—Talbot Mundy.

THE comelengua—is it or isn't it and what is it? And how is it spelled?

Tampico.

In the July 10 Camp-Fire I read an article by Mr. John E. Kelly, of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, about an unknown wild animal, in that country, which they name "Comelengua," and further Mr. Kelly narrates some cases which came to his knowledge of bulls and cows which had been killed by this unknown animal, which leaves no traces. I believe

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when comparing these cases with some similar ones I have known, from Mr. Lavin, an old college chum of mine, of this State of Tamaulipas, that the "Comelengua" of Honduras might be the same animal.

I'll write the story down as Mr. Lavin told it to me a few years back, which story, of course, I took at the time with a grain of salt.

FOR several weeks steers and cows were found dead, in Mr. Lavin's ranch, with their tongues very badly mangled, and at other times cut off and at a distance from the dead body. Mr. Lavin and his mayordomo could not make out what kind of an animal was doing this mischievous work, till one day, while they were riding through the brush, they saw a cow which was turning all kinds of somersaults as if it was crazy. After a few minutes she fell down dead, there being no apparent reason for this wild behavior. When they came close, and while looking at it, a very thin snake (which length, I do not remember), came out—at least pulled out its head and part of its body—from the cow's nostrils and started to crawl away from the place, when they killed it. When they examined the cow's mouth they noticed that the tongue was eaten and almost cut off by the snake, which, crawling up her nose, could work at ease, while the cow was driven mad and finally choked to death on account of the blood pouring out from the wound, as they invariably will swallow their blood when bruised in the mouth.

This snake, he told me, is not frequently found. He told me the Indian name for it, which I have forgotten. When he told me the story, I did not believe a word of it. This snake takes an observing position in the branches of the trees from where they fall on their prey. Furthermore, he told me at that time, that to protect the cattle they had made, and at the time were experimenting on, a rubber attachment that fits into the cow's nostrils, fitted up with a metallic screen. The way of securing it I do not know, but the object of it was to put a stop to the snake doing its work.

May this incomplete information prove of help to our friends in Honduras, to do away with the "Comelengua."—F. E. HEFTY.

East Orange, New Jersey.

It is a delight to meet an old acquaintance, Comalengua (Eats-tongue), well presented as it was at the Camp-Fire of July 10th. Another visitor to newspapers of Honduras in their "silly seasons" is the one that tells us that fishes rain down on or about the same date of each year, in Yoro, near the north coast of the Republic of Honduras. Possibly a true explanation of the accounts of the doings of the comalengua might be given.

Prospectors and hunters of game or of rubber trees are doubtless yet hunting for the "unexplored and unknown parts of Central America." They seem to think that every part has been examined closely in hope of finding gold, silver or trees that would yield the gum that would sell for silver or gold.

I'm going back to hunt for the danto that will charge anything other than the water or the jungle in which to hide, and is dangerous enough to be compared with the water buffalo. The dantos—tapirs—I have seen have stood at the waterside and stared at our canoe as it drew near, until it was within pistol range; unless a bullet went to it first.

The last danto I shot stood on a sandbar beside the Río Uampú, until a .45 from my Marlin crashed through its spine, and the tapir dropped dead.

The Sumo crew yelled, paddled madly to the sandbar and, while some peeled off the half-inch skin, others made the fire for cooking cuts from the danto's tenderloin, that wasn't too tender. The men started another and bigger fire, and kept it going until a thick bed of live coals was ready.

Beside this a hole had been dug in the sand and gravel, while one of the crew cleaned the head of our game. A lot of leaves of the platanillo (*Oxalis acetocellis*), each leaf about a foot wide and four or five feet long, were wrapped around the head and tied by long, thin and tough vines. The bundle was laid on the bed of living coals that had been raked into the pit; more coals, hot gravel and sand were heaped over the bundle, and it was left there until the sunshine on our faces woke laggards the next day.

The bundle was uncovered, the steaming and limp wrappings were opened, and the half dozen of crew and *patrones* feasted right heartily. That baked pig's head wasn't half bad.—PERRY.

A FEW words from Eugene Cunningham in connection with his sto y in this issue. Said story was scheduled for a later issue but had to be shifted at the last moment. I hope his name will be on the cover, but it's pretty late for a change there. If not, our apologies.

San Francisco.

In my ten years of "*Adventuring*" I don't recall having seen in the magazine just the gun-play I've used in this yarn, so you'll perhaps permit a couple of minutes' gossip on the point.

TO ME it was both legitimate and plausible. When a youngster down in Texas I knew quite a few exponents of "gun stuff" who had been left over from the Smoky Seventies. One, an ex-puncher, I saw many times hobbling about town. He told me that the accident occurred while he was practicing the quick draw from a right-hand holster low on the leg. I wrote Mr. Wiggins to get his opinion and he replied, in part:

". . . While I never heard of a man shooting himself while drawing from a shoulder holster, the thing is possible. If the hammer is being cocked as the gun is drawn, and the trigger tied back or removed, as some of the old-time gunfighters were wont to do, I think it would be entirely possible . . ."

SO, THAT'S that! The yarn's fiction, but the characters are drawn pretty much from life. As remarked in the first paragraph, I struggled up to manhood in a Texas where bronks hadn't yet been replaced by Fords. I've known dozens of old-time peace officers—and their families—intimately. The rough life produced some amazonian ladies, believe me! One such caught me shooting doves on her farm on a Thanksgiving Day and threw down on me with a ten-gage double-barrel that looked bigger—for the moment—than any b. l. r. I ever pointed in the Navy. She disarmed and locked me

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in a brick smoke-house while she went for her husband. (I didn't see that she needed him particularly. . . .) But for a faulty hinge on the door, which permitted a speedy departure—minus my .25 Marlin—don't know what the outcome might have been. But decidedly, hers was that war.

MILL VALLEY is a pretty Marin County town of 2500, across the Bay from San Francisco, on the N. W. Pacific electric line. Five miles to the East, on a headland overlooking the Bay, is San Quentin. Quite a bit of big woods in this section, with the noted "Muir Woods" just outside Mill Valley.—EUGENE CUNNINGHAM.

AND they want a Sullivan Law all over the country! Look how badly it's needed and my what a narrow escape the great State of New York had! Wouldn't it have been simply too dreadful for anything if they hadn't made this arrest and got that gun into safekeeping? Oh, ——!

Read this newspaper item sent in during July by G. V. N. Covert from one of his county papers:

Woman of Eighty Protests Fine

Corning, April 21.—Mrs. Ellen Atwood, more than 80 years old, who was fined $50 by T. W. Symonds, justice of the peace at Coopers Plains, following her arrest by two State troopers on the charge of possessing a revolver without a permit, will appeal the case to County Court. Mrs. Atwood's revolver, which had belonged to her husband, had been in the house since his death more than twenty years ago. When two troopers came to her home recently and inquired if she had a revolver, she had no hesitancy in saying that she had and promptly produced it on request. The troopers placed her under arrest at once. Mrs. Atwood denies that she had ever made use of the revolver or threatened to use it, and she is at loss to explain the activity of the State police in regard to the matter.

Probably those poor troopers had no choice in the matter. There was the law, it was their duty to enforce it, and some 4% human had probably vented some personal spite against the eighty-year-old lady and turned in her name. But wouldn't you hate to have been one of those two husky troopers!

OF COURSE it was very reprehensible of Mrs. Atwood to dare retain the revolver of her husband and for over twenty years after his death, even if she did feel she had a right to keep any personal property of her husband's. He was legally possessed of it, for in those days a law-abiding citizen lived in a land of freedom that allowed him the constitutional right of bearing arms. Maybe she particularly prized this keepsake in memory of him. Maybe she had merely allowed it to remain in her house along with other possessions of his and hers. That is her affair, not ours. But it is plain to be seen that she was taken as a law-breaker and since it took two whole troopers to get the gun away from her so peaceably, maybe some one thought she and her husband's revolver had suddenly become a menace to society after twenty years of apparent harmlessness.

Of course we don't know what any of them thought, but it's interesting to speculate. The justice who fined her had, I suppose, no more choice in the matter than had the troopers, but oh, my soul! wouldn't you feel like a brute and a silly ass if you had to sentence an old lady of eighty for having her dead husband's revolver in her possession. But you'd have to do it just the same or be false to your duty. The law compels you—that silly, unjust, dangerous law! And I can't forget those two husky troopers at the old lady's door!

Doesn't it all make you sick? The land of the free and the home of the brave.

I WONDER exactly what becomes of all the guns taken from good citizens? Particularly in the larger towns and cities. Who gets them eventually—or the money for them? I wonder is it always the local government that profits therefrom. I wonder whether any of these guns by chance find their way into the hands of criminals, where they'd be comparatively safe from raids by police or troopers.

I wonder most of all just who and what are really behind this movement for a national Sullivan Law. That's the thing to investigate. Such a law works to the gain of the criminal and to the loss of the good citizen. Who profits by that kind of law? Such a law makes the many still more helpless in the hands of the few. Just which of the various "fews" profit most by such a condition?

IS IT some organization of criminals or directing criminals? Or politicians controlled by criminals? Or certain big corporations or money interests? Or Bolshevists or others plotting for the overthrow of our democracy? Or foreigners with some foreign campaign in our midst? Or politicians playing for the votes of nobly religious citizens

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whose vision is narrower than the edge of a sheet of paper, whose brains are too heavy to float and too light to sink and whose bigotry is the only big thing in their systems? It may not be any of these, but it is *somebody*. There's an African in the wood-pile somewhere. Find him. That will open up things a lot.

Also, write the U. S. Revolver Association, W. A. Morrall, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, Ohio. That address is given in every other issue of our magazine under "Standing Information" in "A. A." (Am sending them this clipping.) They can give you news as to the progress of this silly campaign against the personal liberty of good citizens that works to the benefit of criminals. It's a silly campaign, but it's a very real and dangerous one.

A WORD from Albert Richard Wetjen concerning his story in this issue:

Harrisburg, Oregon.

When the freighter *Berwick Castle* made her more or less famous voyage up the East African coast and into Zanzibar, returning with the Sultan of that place as a prisoner of war bound for St. Helena, I was an ordinary seaman on board. One night as we lay sweating off the mud fort on the sand-spit at Mozambique, an old able seaman we had aboard gave the crew a yarn of a shipwreck and how the second mate's boat had drifted for days without food and water until the men killed one of the apprentices and feasted on him. There was much more of the same sort of thing, nights of murder and agony, fights over the last drop of water, over the woman who was in the boat, and so on. The story was true, for the man who told it was one of the only three survivors. He never divulged the name of the ship, but he did show us an old newspaper clipping recording the picking up of three delirious men not a great way from Cape Race. It was the memory of the above yarn that put the plot for "The Courtship of Captain Driscoll" in my mind. As to the details of the boat's equipment, the agony suffered from thirst, etc., I speak from personal experience, for I have been there myself.

TWO more letters on the San Blas. And who would have expected that we should, seemingly on very good ground, be referred to a woman as authority on the San Blas Indian country, supposed to be practically inaccessible to even the hardiest adventurers?

Washington, D. C.

I have been a reader of your magazine ever since you started the "Fire." My reason for writing you at this time is to help, if I am able, to give those interested some information which will enable them to judge the true facts concerning the San Blas Indians, of Darien, from the letters recently published in Camp-Fire from Messrs. Young and Brandon.

I HAVE been interested in the San Blas for the past eighteen years, though I have never been in the San Blas country. I lived for ten years in territory adjacent to the San Blas, and I might be tempted to enter this discussion with my own knowledge of these people if I did not have at hand one whom I consider a better authority than myself or any one so far heard from. This is Miss Annie Coope, a missionary, a woman, and a true adventurer, and, I may add without fear of offending Miss Coope, a good scout. Miss Coope tried for several years to locate in the San Blas country before she succeeded in obtaining the consent of Chief Charley Robinson to come to his Island (Nargana) and teach his people there. She has been with the San Blas for the last ten years. Lived with them, brought their babies into the world and named them, and educated those old enough to study. She has gained the confidence of the Indians, so much so that she expects to go into the mountains in a short time to teach there at the invitation of the mountain Indians. And when she goes into the mountains she will, so far as known, be the first foreigner to accomplish this (Panamanians included), whatever Mr. Brandon may say to the contrary notwithstanding.

I met Miss Coope in Washington, D. C., on May 10, and together we discussed the letters written by Young and Brandon, and Miss Coope unreservedly placed the stamp of approval on the statements of Mr. Young. As these statements are the ones Mr. Brandon attempts to correct, and both the statements and refutations have been published, it is not necessary for me to repeat them. I should like to quote Miss Coope, however, in connection with several of the points brought up by Mr. Brandon.

WHEN Miss Coope first attempted to enter the San Blas country President Porras of Panama sought to dissuade her, saying, "The Indians are treacherous. I would not dare go there myself." Two years later President Porras called at the house of Miss Coope in Nargana (Chief Robinson's Island) and, when asked if he did not still fear the Indians, said to Miss Coope, "You have made my visit possible. I dared to follow you." Incidentally, I consider that speech placed President Porras with the immortals. Now, if Mr. Brandon is living among the San Blas at the present time, would it not seem, considering the frank admission of the President, that he could more gracefully give credit to the Sky Pilot for having made it possible, than treat the matter as he does?

Again, his statement that these Indians have no Winchester rifles is too broad, for there is no proof that the Winchester rifles taken from the Indians on Nargana Island were the only Winchester rifles owned by San Blas Indians. So far as sending children to the States for schooling is concerned, Miss Coope could not place five Indians in the vicinity of Coney Island at the time of which Mr. Young speaks, but she has been instrumental in sending a number of boys to the States for that purpose and I personally have met one who was educated in New York and is now in Panama studying electricity. Miss Coope states, however, that the Panamanian Government objects to sending these boys to the States, and also that the expense is so great it is difficult to accomplish much in the way of advanced education at the present time.

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I SHOULD like to say that while Mr. Brandon refers to his reply to Edgar Young as a "knock" at Mr. Young, I do not look at it in that light. His remarks concerning Mr. Young's dope on the San Blas do not constitute a "knock" at Mr. Young, but they are most decidedly a "knock" at the San Blas Indians, and this, from my knowledge of the San Blas and my rather complete knowledge of the civilized (?) people inhabiting the territory adjacent to the Indians, I resent. Mr. Brandon terms the Indians drunken and lazy. Any one who ever navigated Bottle Alley knows that the San Blas Indians work diligently on their plantations and produce material for barter and sale; otherwise what are the traders doing up there? Their drunkenness (as a tribe) is limited to certain days of fiesta, which is also well known. I should like to have Mr. Brandon tell us what the civilized portion of the Panama Republic produces, and also ascertain and let us know the principal (and most popular) commodity handled by the merchants of this portion of the Republic.

I CAN NOT place either Mr. Young or Mr. Brandon, although both names are familiar, the first in connection with Canal work and the latter with Panama commercial life. Miss Coope, also, tells me that in her ten years of life with the San Blas Indians and up to the date on which she and I talked of these matters, she had no knowledge of Mr. Brandon in the section of the San Blas territory open to foreigners. Mr. Brandon states that "he does as little trading as possible," though I note he does not say just what his interest in the San Blas country consists of.

If Mr. Young cares to write to Miss Coope on these or other matters concerning the subject, Miss Coope authorizes me to give him this permission. Her address is "Miss Annie Coope, Box 1075, Cristobal, C. Z." Mr. Brandon would not require this permission, as he is now in that section of the country and will be at liberty to call on Miss Coope in person when she returns to Nargana in September.

IN CONCLUSION, I should like to touch on the capacity of these Indians for civilization and education generally. How about a witch-doctor who could be taught to laugh at the medicine he used to make? How would you like that, eh? (as Bill Adams says).

I regret that I could not make a more readable article of this or present Miss Coope's knowledge of the San Blas in a more fitting way. Such as it is, however, you are at liberty to use it as you like.—W. T. GREENE.

The second letter, from Edward Perry, who has already talked to us about early Asiatic influence in this hemisphere. And who can tell us what happened to the robbers of this bank of Panama?

East Orange, New Jersey.

"Once More the San Blas" reminds me that J. Dyneley Prince said of the language of the San Blas—Tule—of Panama:

"The Tule is in many respects an isolating language, and can certainly not be classified under the head of polysynthetic idioms. In face, in its word formation and sentence structure it reminds one of the Malay and its kindred dialects, rather than of a North American language."

In the same "Grammar of the Tule Language" he gives "*sagala*, head (*chagla; saigla; sagla*), and "*sagla*, chief." Mr. Young thinks it is a Carib word.

His "answer" seems to be a mine of information that would be right valuable to any who planned a ramble through the hinderland of the San Blas.

Can any reader of "Camp-Fire" tell us what was the fate of a party who tunnelled into a bank in Panama City, then ran to Bayano River or thereabout, it was reported, and with the loot made for the San Blas country?

"Camp-Fire" is much more than an entertaining section of a magazine; it helps to a fair understanding of deeds and of people.

With cordial wishes for the continued prosperity of the Camp-Fire, I am, at your service, sincerely—EDWARD PERRY.

WITH great joy I pass this on to you. Hugh Pendexter has been getting on my nerves by going on year after year without making mistakes in the historical data used in his stories. It isn't human to act that way and it makes me sort of creepy. Well, finally he went and did it. The funny thing is that either all of you failed to note the mistake or—almost as strange —didn't write to either Mr. Pendexter or me about it. He owns up himself, in a letter which met and defeated the charge of a mistake on another point:

Norway, Maine.

But had Mr. —— wished to "count coup" he should have pointed out one error I am guilty of where I say (referring to Highland pistols) ". . it was with such that Major Pitcairn delivered America's defiance at Lexington." Of course I knew it was Pitcairn who led the British troops from Boston to Lexington and bawled out the provincials by crying, "Disperse, ye rebels! —— you, why don't you disperse?" He fired what he called his "elegant pistol" at them (Highland pistol). He was killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill by a colored man. His body was buried under Christ Church, Boston, and afterward removed to England. (Livermore's "Historical Research.") It was stated (Sargent's "Dealings with the Dead") that a mistake was made and the wrong body removed to England. My original notes had it that Pitcairn, the British officer, not the provincials, "fired the shot heard round the world." I have given the strong impression he was an American. *Mea culpa.* I deliberately did the opposite of what I purposed doing. I'm a strong believer now in brain-storms. And I also failed to catch it in the proof.—PENDEXTER.

IT HAS just been brought to our attention that the poem "The Derelict," signed by John A. Wass, M. M., page 175 of our August 10 issue, is, barring details of punctuation and omission of a sub-title, the same as "The Derelict," in the bound volume

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"Rhymes of the Red Ensign," by C. Fox Smith, published by Hodder and Stoughton, London, New York and Toronto, 1919.

Naturally our use of this poem was without any knowledge of its having been published elsewhere. Though far more attempts at plagiarism, deliberate or unconscious, are frustrated than succeed, magazines must now and then suffer from them. As you know, it is our magazine's custom not to cover up its misfortune but to give publicity to cases of this kind, not only as a step toward punishing the offender and warning others against him, but to maintain entire frankness between our readers and ourselves. We never consciously give you stories or verse as new if they are not new; when we do so unconsciously we give you the facts when they become known to us.

And at least we can introduce you to the book of other good poems of similar nature.

A WORD from one of our Camp-Fire Stations. Always glad to get news from them:

Deseronto, Ontario.

Well, Camp-Fire Station here is running slow, but what we lack in quantity of callers we are making up in quality. Last year I entertained for a night Robert Flintoft of Mount Kisco and his sidekick, Jim Barker of Ossining, who were en route to the Georgian Bay by canoe as per instructions received from me through A. A. They got up part of the distance, then returned to New York but I believe will go ahead with their trip this year. Good boys and I hope we treated them well. Then I had an "electrical" traveler in from Montreal—he is an *Adventure* enthusiast. The other day I had Charlie Burkman, who walked last year from Halifax to Vancouver, 3,642 miles in 149 days. This boy is only 22 now and he is on his way around the world, going from here to the head of the lakes, crossing to Duluth and on through the Western States to San Francisco and Seattle to take the boat for Australia and Japan. It is his purpose to walk through China, India, etc., to France, cross the channel to England and steam back to Halifax. He has three years to make the trip and if successful will be given twenty thousand dollars by the sportsmen of the Maritime Provinces. I gave Mr. Burkman a list of the Camp-Fire Stations west of the lakes and told him to be sure and call on the boys.—HARRY M. MOORE.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club or resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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60—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1133 Lincoln Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
80—Detroit. R. A. Taylor, 5129 Maybury Grand.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
118—North Muskegon. J. P. Forsyth, *The Peninsular Clarion*.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.

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107—New York City. Bronx Division, U. S. Junior Naval Reserves, 3132 Webster Ave.
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Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
Great Britain—65—North Wales. William J. Cooper, "Kia Ora," Plastirion Ave., Prestatyn.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. El Humo, Apartado 238.
Porto Rico—46—San Juan. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 944.
Spanish Honduras—70—Jos. Buckly Taylor, La Ceiba.

FOLLOWING the Camp-Fire custom, Georges Surdez rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

New York.

Pavements are hard on the feet, noises rattle our alleged brains. But I shut my ears to the distant hum and take a trip to the woods, the sea, the tropics; I wade through snow and bake in the desert, in the company of regular fellows, through the pages of *Adventure*. And now I am fortunate enough to be asked to come forward into the firelight and allowed to get one yarn off my chest—perhaps I heard it from some one, who knows.

A MAP always holds fascination for me. I wonder what the pink spot, where the names are few and scattered, looks like. And the blue suggests a tramp steamer, the smell of the sea, new lands. My idea of really living is to be able to go anywhere, anytime. Not exactly an original thought. I think every one at Camp-Fire feels the same. That's why he's here. To take a trip in imagination is surely better than not going at all—and sometimes healthier. With me it's a circle. To write means I may travel (perhaps). To travel means I can write (perhaps).

I'd like to widen my acquaintance with a certain type of man. He may be a sailor or a clerk, a shopkeeper in an African trading post or the type of wanderer who has knocked from Nome to Sydney and way stations, who is not afraid to take a chance, to sees in an adventurous life more than money, who is "real."

This is my "hello" and having said it and received the answer I feel better, refreshed. The wanderlust is for the moment allayed and I'm good for another stretch.—GEORGES SURDEZ.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader.

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free identification card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchange; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service (except our assaying and oil services) free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

I. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Bigelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. ★ The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. ★ Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section*).

4. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico and Virgin Group
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, 90 South Orchard St., San José, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

5. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage 8 cents.*)

6. South Sea Islands Part 2
CHARLES BROWN, JR., 213 E St., San Rafael, Calif. French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn), Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

7. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Sydney Press Club, 51 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

8. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

9. New Guinea
DR. ALBERT BUELL LEWIS, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, P. O. Box 202, Hollywood, Calif. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

11. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 714 Marquette Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

12. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

13. Asia, Southern
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine St., New Orleans, La. Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Borneo. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelop with 5 cents—in Mr. Beadle's case 12 cents—in stamps NOT attached)*

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14. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

15. ★ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage 12 cents.*)

16. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

17. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

18. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

19. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, 1315 Josephine Street, New Orleans, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

20. Africa Part 7 Egypt and Barbary States
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Egypt and Sudan, Tunis, Algeria. Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

21. Turkey and Asia Minor
J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York. Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

22. Balkans, except Albania
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23. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St. N. W., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

24. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St. N. W., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

25. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
FRED F. FLEISCHER, Room 308, 26 Broadway, New York. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

26. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

27. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

28. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, 90 So. Orchard St., San José, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

29. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

30. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, Box 281, San Luis Obispo, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

31. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

32. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
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33. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

34. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

35. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
ED. L. CARSON, Mount Vernon, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

36. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

37. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

38. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

39. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

40. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Parts of Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Except portions mentioned below. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

41. Western U. S. Part 2 Parts of Utah and Ariz.
VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Cliff Dwellings, Two Grey Peaks, the Carrizo Mts., Cañon De Chelley, Chin Lee Wash, the Moonlight Country, the Blue Mts. (Utah), Navaho Indian Reservation in general. Pack trips, prospecting, hunting, camping, trapping and mining; habits, etc., of Navaho Indians.

42. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 504 So. 2d. St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

43. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

44. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
OTTO M. JONES, Warden, Bureau of Fish and Game, Boise, Idaho. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

45. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

46. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

47. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

48. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

49. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

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50. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

51. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, *Alexandria Gazette*, Alexandria, Va. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia, and Maryland.

52. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Tenn., Ala., Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

53. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main Street, Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

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H. C. WIRE, Chino, Calif. If all conditions are complied with, a *general estimate* as to composition and commercial value will be given from ore specimens submitted. Specimens half the size of a man's fist, in canvas bag, cigar-box or other strong wrapping; preferably by parcel post; *always marked with sender's name and address.* Separate letter telling general nature of locality, mass of rocks where found and of neighboring rocks; what local mining activities; *what particular mineral is sought in sample;* nothing that gives away exact location. Samples (usually destroyed in analysis) will not be returned. Charge: $1 per sample.

Oil. A rough general opinion given on oil indications. Give general description of lay of land as to hills, exposed rock-beds, kind of rock. (Can help also by referring inquirer to U. S. Geol. Survey bulletins that may bear on locality.) No questions as to stocks, companies or investments answered. Charge: 50 cents per locality.

No responsibility assumed by either the magazine or me beyond honesty and sincere endeavor. Name and address of sender will not even be passed on to the magazine in case inquiry and answer are sent it for publication.

OLD SONGS THAT MEN HAVE SUNG

ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York City. A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.

WEAPONS, PAST and PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

A.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

C.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1890. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAINEERING

Especially of New England. ARTHUR BENT, Appalachian Mountain Club, 1050 Tremont Bldg., Boston, Mass.

STANDING INFORMATION

For information on trade in any part of the world, address J. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash, D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

Islands of the Seas

WHEN you've finished reading this you will have learned something you didn't know before; though whether that something is worth learning I can't say:

Question:—"What are the approximate area, rainfall and topography of the islands of the following names, and approximate location?

1. St. Paul, 80° East long., 40° South lat., in Indian Ocean.
2. Trinidad, 30° West long., 21° South lat., in South Atlantic.
3. St. Andrews, 81° 45' West long., 12° 30' North lat., in Caribbean Sea.
4. Old Providence, 81° 25' West long., 13° 15' North lat., in Caribbean Sea.
5. Caxones, 83° 10' Westlong., 16° 20' North lat., in Caribbean Sea.
6. Swan, 83° 50' West long., 17° 25' North lat., in Caribbean Sea.

Also which ones are inhabited and to what country does each belong?"—I. M. STALKER, Represa, Calif.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Most of the islands you ask about are little more than uninhabited rocks except for perhaps light-keepers or wireless operators. You ask their location but at the same time give me their location, so I can not add to that.

St. Paul in the Indian Ocean is a barren, rocky, crater-like island, uninhabited. Trinidad in South Atlantic was inhabited when I visited it, but I have been told there is a signal station there now, though it is not shown as such on U. S. radio and cable charts. It is volcanic in nature, thinly covered with coarse grass, with some light soil in a gully between two hills. It is dry and arid generally, but heavy rain squalls pass over it at times.

St. Andrew in the Caribbean belongs to Colombia and has several American planters with Jamaican field hands cultivating it. The island is about eight square miles in area, and is in general a high ridge running north and south, sloping to each shore.

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It is fertile and has good spring water (no streams).

Old Providence is a volcanic island of about ten square miles. It is rugged and has three peaks, each over one thousand feet high. There are four small streams which flow only in the rainy season. There is a village at Santa Catalina Harbor. The island is very fertile.

The only island of Caxones that I know about is practically only a reef; but one part of it called "Hobby" is above water and is covered with bushes and a small palm or two and is about two or three hundred yards in diameter. It is not inhabited, but is a favorite ground and anchorage for fishermen.

Swan Island is about ninety miles south by east from the above reef, roughly. There are two parts to this island and both are very flat and densely wooded. It is nowhere more than sixty feet above the sea. It has a radio station and a light of good power, showing eighteen miles. There is a settlement at the west end of the western island, and coconuts are grown by the people. The soil is very fertile, and the islands are swarming with ducks, pigeons and other birds. Sea-turtle visit the island in season.

Trust this is the information you want.

The full statement of sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

"A. A." Notes

REGARDING the subjoined communication, Brother Liebe writes: "I'd be glad if you will publish the following paragraph in the 'A. A.' pages. It is in the nature of an addition or an explanation rather than a correction:"

In my letter to Wm. De Hart, published in the magazine for July 20th, I stated that the Ocala section, in Marion County, Florida, was "a little too far north for citrus fruits." We down here in Orange County think it *is* a little too far north—but up in Marion County they don't! The fact remains that the cold risk must be a *little* greater there than here because it *is* a little farther north. But they do grow citrus fruits up there, as fine as are grown anywhere. It is the home of the noted "Pineapple" orange. This in fairness to Marion County—long may she wave!—and if I owe her any apology she's got it right here and now.—HAPSBURG LIEBE.

IF YOU'VE written Brother Mahaffey and got no answer, it may be because the mail service between the U. S. and Mexico is so bad. He recently moved from Topolobampo, Sinaloa, to San Luis Obispo, California, and there's been a lot of confusion about readdressing his mail. Along in the middle of October he'll move back again, and I suppose that will mean more trouble.

"Knotting and Splicing," a book by Hasluck, now costs 75 cents instead of 50, as we originally reported.

Breaking into Ranch Work

CATTLE-RAISING is now efficiency-ized; and that means no more romantic night-herding to the tune of "Roll On, Little Dogy, Roll On."

Question:—"If I may impose upon your good nature (along with a great many others, I suppose) I should like to ask you several questions regarding the cattle industry in Montana and neighboring States. I took an extended trip through that country last Summer, and while I saw several small ranches that were keeping a few head, I was unable to find any that carried on the industry on a large scale.

I should like to get into communication with a cattleman with whom I might make arrangements to work for a year or two. The money end of the proposition is not very important, provided the remuneration would cover expenses to start. The idea is to get into the business. Not on my own, for I know that I should be unable to make a go of it without much more knowledge than I now have. I should like to start with a man who would later consider taking a partner, provided we were mutually agreeable.

I am prepared to give any reference that may be required both from people here in the East, and also in the West.

I shall be very grateful for any information you may be able to give me or for the names of any men whom you think might be interested."—LELAND S. WILSON, Beverly, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Davis:—We could give the names of some big stockmen, but it is dollars to doughnuts that any letters you addressed them relative to working for them and learning the business, would remain unanswered. There are two reasons for this. For one thing, the old-time cattleman is accustomed to doing business direct, man to man, rarely through correspondence. Again, there have been a few Easterners hired by letter, and the results have been so unsatisfactory to both parties that 99 per cent. of the stockmen will hire only men that are right on the ground.

As you want to learn the cattle business and there is some hardship in it, I think you couldn't begin to learn it in any better way than to come West and find a job in person. This is not the best time to come, however. There are more men than jobs in the Western country at present, and naturally the most experienced will be the first to land. If you do come, being totally inexperienced, I imagine your novitiate will be somewhat as follows:

Chore-boy on the home ranch doing jobs nobody else wants to do; if you make good, you will probably get a chance to learn how to irrigate, run a mower and do general field work. If you have stuck it out until Fall, you probably will be a good enough horseman to get a chance to help round up the cattle that are running either on the open range or in the forest reserves. The calves and breeding-herd will be taken to the home ranch, while the beef cut will be trailed to the loading-point for shipment.

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Winter will be a round of hauling hay and feeding it, regardless of weather conditions. Weak stock and cows with early calves will be cut out and taken to the home corrals.

In early Spring there will still be hay to haul and feed. There will be plenty of cattle mired down that must be pulled out to relieve the monotony.

The prospect is not a romantic one, but the picture is a fairly accurate one of conditions on a Western stock ranch in this age. I don't know of any outfit but that tries to put up enough forage to carry its herds over the Winter months. Few cowboys in this Northern country wear chaps today, and most of them are competent ranch hands. They didn't take to it willingly: but high-priced land, better cattle and overcrowded ranges forced the evolution of the business.

It has become a stabilized business. When stabilization came romance departed. I stress this point, unduly perhaps, so that if the romance of the old days is what is attracting you to the business, you will not be disillusioned later.

It is not surprizing that on your trip last year you were unable to find any ranches where the business was conducted on a large scale. The big ranches are entrenched in localities remote from the railroads and the main highways. Open ranges of other years have become farms.

You will find big outfits along the Missouri River, sixty to seventy-five miles south of the Great Northern Railroad. Malta, on the railroad, is an outfitting point. You will find other big outfits on leased land in the Blackfeet Indian reservation just west of the Glacier National Park; other big outfits are in southeastern Montana, sixty to one hundred miles south of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Miles City and Forsyth are outfitting points, as are also Sheridan, Wyoming, and Belle Fourche, So. Dak.

In conclusion, I would say that after you have learned the business you would be in a much better position to make a partnership deal than you could make now.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop. Exception: Our assaying and oil services.

Books on Brazil and Argentina

ALSO the names of some big American firms doing business down that way:

Question:—"I wish to presume on your kindness to the extent of asking the following questions, and ask that, should these questions be published, my name and address be withheld.

Please suggest some good books dealing with the trade conditions, the customs, the language, and the climate of Brazil and Argentina.

Also if it be not out of your line, I would like to ask that you suggest some of the big corporations operating in these countries, and give me in a general sort of way your ideas as to the feasibility of a young man with a college education obtaining a position and where it would be best to apply for the same."

Answer, by Dr. Goldsmith:—The following are books that may be consulted on Brazil and Argentina. Most of them are not wholly to be recommended, but they are the best that are available for English readers:

BRAZIL

"Brazil," by Pierre Denis, T. Fisher Unwin, London.*

"Brazil: Today and Tomorrow," by L. R. Elliott, the MacMillan Company, New York.

"Brazil: Past, Present and Future," by J. C. Oakenfull, John Bale, Sons and Danielsson, London.*

Oakenfull's book is fullest of whole range material. If you buy it, be sure to get the 1919 edition.

ARGENTINA

"Argentine Plains and Andine Glaciers," by Walter Larden, T. Fisher Unwin, London.*

"The Argentine in the Twentieth Century," by Martinez and Lewandowski, T. Fisher Unwin, London.*

"Modern Argentina," by W. H. Koebel, Francis Griffiths, London.*

"Baedeker of the Argentine Republic," by Albert B. Martinez, R. Sopina, Barcelona, Spain, 1914.

Here are the names of some firms:

Swift & Company, 32 Tenth Avenue, New York.

Armour & Company, 120 Broadway, New York.

W. R. Grace & Company, 7 Hanover Square, New York.

Guaranty Trust Company, 140 Broadway, New York.

Cerro de Pasco Copper Company, 15 Broad Street, New York.

Guggenheim Brothers, 120 Broadway, New York.

You might write to some of these firms, and you can judge by the interest shown in you as to whether or not it would be well for you to undertake the enterprise of going to South America.

A 'Cross-Continent Hiking Outfit

KEEP the load down to thirty-five pounds:

Question:—"Please note list of articles we plan to take with us on a hiking trip across the U. S. We figure they will make up into two packs of 28 pounds each.

This of course includes only the things in our pack. We did not figure the things we are wearing while walking. I will give you a list of everything we have, and of course you will understand that some of the things will be on our person and not in the pack.

One other thing before the list. In regard to eatables. You will notice in the list that we are carrying only spices, coffee and milk because as yet we have not figured out what would be suitable to carry in the line of real eats for two fellows like us. We figure though that two days' rations at a time will be plenty to have on hand.

When weighing up the following list we made two packs first, put in everything we intended to carry and then weighed them; and as I say at the present time they weigh 28 pounds. So you will see I can not give you the weight of each article separate unless you are particularly anxious to get it; then I will weigh it up for you.

This outfit cost us exactly $145. This amount is

*You can secure any of these London books through Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Avenue, New York, or Putnam's, 2 West Forty-Fifth Street, New York.

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allowing $20 for a shotgun which we have not bought yet. I will have to give you this list on another piece of paper as it won't fit on here.

Another thing. You have said that hikers on a trip of this sort can average 5 to 12 miles a day. We are both experienced and seasoned in the walking line, and although we are not going to speed it up our average, I think, should be at the very least 12 miles a day; and we ought to make 20 to 25 some days for the first three months at least, because we will not have to work then.

Another thing. What would you advise to do with water if you wanted a drink and thought the water was bad?

I wonder if you would be kind enough to explain as to firearms. What about license in some States to carry a gun and license in some States to hunt? Does this mean you have to have a license in some States for the gun only and not the hunting, and in the others for hunting only and not the gun?

How can you get a license? Where can you get a license? Is a different one required in each State? In your candid opinion is one absolutely necessary?

If you would care to hear from us once in a while when we are on the road we would drop you a line or send a souvenir. Anything in the letter or list that seems wrong to you I wish you would correct.

How about eats, what would you advise?"—Walter O. Schulz, 300 Grand Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

GENERAL CAMP EQUIPMENT

Water-proof wedge tent 5 x 7 x 5, no poles; rubber poncho, mess-kit—3 pots, one for coffee; frying-pan (Abercrombie's armor-steel), 2 enamel plates, 2 enamel cups, 2 teaspoons, 2 tablespoons, 2 forks (aluminum); folding lantern (for candles), hatchet (Marble's Safety Pocket, the best make), fire-grate (3-pot size), Auto-Strop safety razor, two small canvas carry-alls, to carry all the small articles including housewife, etc.; Marble's water-proof match-safe, radiolite watch (Ingersoll), compass, pocket camera (autographic), trench mirror to stand on table or hang on wall, 2½ x 3½; road map of U. S. (Rand & McNally), ball of twine, face soap, toilet paper (loose sheets in small box), tooth-powder, collapsible shaving-brush, shaving-soap—stick; comb, dish-cloth, dish-towel, medicine kit—2 bandages, court plaster or tape, powder, iodine, unguentine, salve, vaseline, fuller's earth; 50-foot rope—window-sash rope; fishing-outfit—no pole; miscellaneous—a small tin box with rubber bands, large horse-blanket, safety-pins, etc., talcum powder, three cans—small one for salt and pepper mixed 2 to 1, 1 for ¼ lb. sugar, 1 for ½ lb. coffee; can of condensed milk—cover hole with tape after use; canvas water-bucket, shotgun—to get yet; Kirkman's soap for clothes, writing-pad.

PERSONAL CAMP EQUIPMENT

Double everything in the following list as there are two of us: Slouch hat, two light-weight wool khaki shirts, black tie, two suits of light-weight wool underwear, two pair wool socks, khaki breeches—extra seat and extra knee-pieces; leather belt 1½ inches wide, Marble's sheath knife, jack-knife-can-opener-screw-driver-awl-blade, U. S. Army shoes, spiral leggings, tooth-brush, three khaki handkerchiefs, signal whistle, money belt, Turkish towel, swimming-suit, suspensory, good wool blanket, single or double ply; canvas bags for sleeping, pipe, tobacco-pouch, neckerchief, pencil.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—You've one of the best and lightest outfits I've ever seen listed. I should add some extra socks—four or five pairs instead of two; and you might think about having a pair of good leather sandals or slippers. (I wear oxfords or Endicott-Johnson sandals—leather, with open notches.) If you carry four ounces of castor oil and oil the leather of your shoes occasionally they'll stand up better and be better shaped to the foot.

You'll probably add about two or three days' emergency rations, and then regular grub for two days' supply.

I've walked, averaging, as high as 15 to 20 miles a day. I don't like too rigid a schedule in this, however. If you stop along to work, the average will be away down; though when you are on the go, 12 to 20 miles is feasible. I always figure as low as possible—and then I'm feeling good to find myself doing better than I expected.

Your camera will be your best sport all the way. And I should be glad to hear your experiences when you find time to write me—troubles, difficulties, best times and all. You see what I am up against—I know about what I like, but mighty few people agree as to what is the best and worst of a trip. What you tell me, I pass on to the others who have things in mind of this same kind.

It is *always* best not to overdo. You can do fine with load up to 35 pounds each. Over this, strain may be bad.

Eats—what you like; look out for heartburn; make big meal at noon; then light meal at night (may be late making camp). Boil water you are doubtful of. Three lads out of St. Louis—two typhoid, and one died (auto trip).

I'd say get 36-gage Harrington & Richardson ($10, about). No. 10, 7½, 6 and 4 shot. Little noise, good for most game you'll see. Every State demands different license—and if you shoot game you violate the law. Thousands of auto travelers do shoot, and violate. Nobody will bother you west of Missouri River, shooting rabbits and that kind. But you are likely to get into trouble, around towns and east of Mississippi especially, if you hunt.

If I were you I'd start without any firearm till you are west of, say, Mississippi. Then get a shotgun, 20 gage, 36 gage, and perhaps a .22 rifle. Carry a steel rod, reel, lines and various hooks, sinkers, instead.

Get a line on your experiences before taking any chances. After the first month you'll be able to judge conditions for yourself. A gun would be useless this side of the Mississippi. But fish-rod would give you fun and considerable meat, though probably not enough to pay for it.

Don't think you'll need the 50 foot of rope—much lighter will serve to hold up tent. Anyhow you'll have time of your life.

Japanese Ports of Call

VALUABLE tips for the free-lance trader:

Question:—"Among the various things I wish to know are facts relating to the seaports of Japan. Which are they, and how do they rank in importance? What are the facilities for handling goods at

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each? Which has the best railroad connections? What procedure is it necessary to go through to take goods into the country? What extent of the country is served by railroads? In connection with this I tried to secure a railroad map without success.

It is for the possibility that you might be able to get such literature for me that I send postal reply coupons for the sum of ten cents.

Would it be advisable to take an automobile, and if so to what extent could it be used, and what size would be advisable?"—H. S. BALSON, Toronto, Ont., Can.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—Yokohama is the first port of call for trans-Pacific liners from America, and the foremost trade port in Japan. All steamer lines from America, China, Australia, India nad Europe converge there. Also it is the seaport of Tokyo, the capital and center of the art, political, commercial, and social activities of the empire. It is but eighteen miles from Tokyo and has frequent connection by express and other trains and by electric cars. It is also the center of European residence in Japan. For instance, I know of several doing business in Tokyo who live in Yokohama and commute from there.

Kobe is the second port of call for liners from both north and south points, and ranks second in importance amongst the open ports of Japan. It lies 358 miles, or a little over twelve hours, south from Yokohama. It is the port of Osaka, the second largest city in Japan—Tokyo being the largest—and center of the largest commercial and industrial interests of not only Japan but the Orient.

Osaka lies about twenty miles southeast of Kobe. Kobe is also the port of Kyoto (47 miles N. E.) the third largest city and center of the pottery and porcelain industries.

Nagasaki is the third port of call for trans-Pacific liners from America and the first port of call for steamers from China and the south, but it ranks fifth, I believe, in importance as a port.

The above three cities are on the south and east. Then on the north coast:

Shimonoseki is the largest port through which native business is transacted with Korea, Northern China and Siberia, and so ranks about third in importance as a trade port.

Tsuruga (Kanagusaki) is the port for Vladivostok. I judge that this may be considered the fourth in importance.

Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki are the ports where the bulk of European and American business is transacted. One working the north part of the empire would make headquarters at Yokohama; the center is commanded by Kobe, and the south by Nagasaki. All three have good rail connection with all places worth doing business with.

Harbor facilities in all three ports are excellent. In case the ships of a line do not dock, lighterage service is maintained at a moderate cost, or can be obtained through one's broker.

You will need a passport, for which consult your own authorities. The Imperial Japanese Custom-House has branches at all ports of entry. The formalities are easy. Personal belongings and samples of merchandise only fit to be used as such are passed free. Tobacco and cigars are taxed, excepting 50 cigars or cigarets for personal use. Furniture of foreigners coming to reside in Japan is passed free if it has been used and is not for sale.

Commercial travelers, up to last year, are not taxed, and they can have the import duties on samples, used for securing orders, refunded upon reexportation if they apply for such privilege at the time of entering the goods. The Japanese import tariff, like our own, is subject to constant change. A copy of the latest edition of the Import Tariff of Japan, in English, may always be procured at any book store for about two yen—50 cents in our money is a yen.

In taking into Japan any quantity of merchandise the more satisfactory and usual way of doing business is through a reputable broker. Two such brokerage firms in Yokohama are Helm Bros., Ltd., and Pitt & Scott, Ltd. The British consulate should be able to advise you about this point.

The usual procedure is to quote the lowest cash price, f. o. b. factory or seaport, to the resident commission merchant in Japan, and display samples in his showroom. He draws up a *pro-forma* invoice, including cost, freight, insurance, duties, sundry incidentals, and his own commission, and agrees on a price to be quoted to the trade, either with or without cost, insurance, and freight—termed c. i. f. prices—delivered at the custom-house wharf, or in the buyer's warerooms.

The traveler then calls on the merchants accompanied by an English-speaking Japanese salesman who quotes prices and invites inspection of samples. Business is usually done on a two to five per cent. margin. Payment is made by drafts through the bank at 30, 60, or 90 days after shipment of goods.

Some of the larger and the international banking-firms are issuing pamphlets on procedure in foreign-country merchandising. And you may be able to get something on the subject from J. Roland Kay Co., Inc., 18 East 41st St., New York. They are international advertisers with offices in Tokyo. The *Trans-Pacific Magazine*, 120 Broadway, New York, would be a good thing for you to have. This last will give you all sorts of trade helps.

Under another cover I am sending the only map I am able to spare for railroad lines, but it gives all the chief connections.

I would advise hiring or purchasing a car over there and so get rid of freight charges and responsibility in transit and formalities of the customs-house regarding automobiles. Also, you would get something adapted to the roads, which are generally speaking good between all large towns, and for which you could easily get parts in Japan. If, however, you do take one over I should advise a light-weight one.

Automobiles accompanying tourists are admitted free of duty, provided the owner make a deposit of the amount of the duty. This will be refunded when he leaves the country with the auto before the expiration of twelve months from the time of entry.

World's Most Even Climate

ONLY spot on the globe where the weather furnishes no topic for conversation:

Question:—"I would like to visit the Hawaiian Islands, and would ask a certain amount of information about them.

First concerning agriculture, the price of land and what kind of soil—hardness of putting under plow,

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etc. How about roads, railroads, if any; also taxes? Would like to know if islands are controlled or influenced by the rich of any country. I have heard and read that there is supposed to be great natural beauty and charm there with a wonderful climate all year around. Is that true?

Would also like to know about the animal life and flora of the islands. Is it about the same on all of the group?

Is living high, and could a fellow if run broke while there make enough money to get back?

As I now know it to my imagination the islands are famous for coffee, lepers and sweet music. How about it?

Anything you would be able to tell me along the lines I am interested in will be appreciated."—A. E. Asp, Milaca, Minn.

Answer, by Mr. Halton:—Regret to say that most of the land fit for cultivation is already under control of the large sugar and pineapple interests, and it would be almost impossible for one to purchase land for ordinary farming. If it were possible, the average American farmer would find great difficulty in competing with the Asiatics who now practically control the vegetable products.

All the land is of volcanic origin and is lacking in potash and requires considerable fertilization and irrigation. There are good roads throughout the islands and small railroads on some of them; but as stated above, the land being under the control of the sugar interests the roads are used for transferring sugar-cane to the mills.

There is no question but that Hawaii has great natural beauty and a climate that is probably the most equable in the world. The average temperature for thirty years in Honolulu was 76°, twenty-four hours per day, twelve months in the year. There is probably no other spot in the world that can boast such an even climate; but the rainfall varies according to the location. Honolulu rainfalls average about thirty inches a year, but on the windward side of some of the islands the rainfall sometimes reaches 300 and 400 inches a year.

Regarding the animal life and flora, on the small island Lanai there are some deer and on Kahwoolawe there are wild goats. As for the flora, all kinds of tropical plants grow in profusion on all the islands.

Living in Honolulu is about the same as on the mainland, but unless you do mechanical work or have other special qualifications it is not easy to obtain employment sufficient to return you to the mainland.

I am afraid the vaudeville stage is responsible to a large extent for the impression that the Hawaiian Islands are a conglomerate mass of coffee, lepers street musicians and Hulu girls. As a matter of fact, only a little coffee is grown on the islands, and that only on the west coast on the island of Hawaii. The leper settlement is located on the island of Molocai, to which no visitors have access; and while the street musicians abound, with their plaintive Hawaiian music, the Hulu girl is an ancient institution that has practically disappeared. The Hulu today appeals only to the salaciousness of tourists.

I am sending you, under separate cover, pamphlets descriptive of the island, from which you will note that it is no land for the unemployed, but is a veritable Paradise if it is merely a vacation that you are looking for.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

COOK, FRANK. Last seen in July 1920 in Manila. Was 2nd steward ship running to Tientsin and around the Islands. Formerly worked at Kaylee Hotel, Shanghai, and for Pacific Commercial Co. of Manila. Believed to be somewhere in the Orient at present. Remember the trip on the Thomas and the "drop 'em dead" kid of Yokohama in Feb. 1920. Write.—Address WALTER P. LOGUE, 541 14th St., San Francisco, Calif.

CURRAN, PATRICK. Left Limerick City, Ireland, for New York about thirty years ago. Was last heard of in Klondyke. Formerly a Pork Butcher at O'Mara's Bacon Store in Limerick City. Any information will be appreciated.—Address FRANK COLLINS, 312 East 42nd St., New York.

SAVAGE, FREDERIC. Last heard from in Las Vegas, Nevada, in Summer of 1921. Mail forwarded to Phoenix, Arizona, was returned unclaimed. Formerly with Aviation S. C. About twenty-three years old, five feet ten inches tall. His grandmother is very anxious and will welcome any information.—Address MRS. H. G. HAWKINS, 305 Frank St., Bay City, Michigan.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

BUCKLEY, THOMAS. Last seen in Valparaiso, Chili. Your shipmate would like to hear from you.—Address A. TURNER, care of *Adventure*.

BURTON, BOB, JR. Left home in Kentucky in 1915. Last heard of in British South Africa. Was sergeant major in Royal Fusiliers during the war. Twenty-one years of age, tan complexion, five feet four inches in height, weighed one hundred and fifty pounds, brown hair and brown eyes. Has shrapnel scar back of right ear. Any information will be appreciated.—Address CONSTANCE F. BURTON, care of *Adventure*.

TALBOTT, LIZZIE MRS. (Colored.) Last heard from during the Summer of 1916. Works in Long Island or Rhode Island. Mrs. Martha A. Jackson died on Oct. 17, 1921. Write.—Address GEORGE E. DRAYTON, 161 West 53rd St., N. Y. C.

JORKINSON, T. Served in 109th Company, Canadian Forestry Corp., in Kincardine, Fifeshire, Scotland, in 1918. At that time he was about twenty-three years of age, and is Danish-American. A friend of his who served in the same company would like to hear from him. Any information will be appreciated.—Address LEO FOLEY, 12 Lincoln Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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WELLS, FRED S. Last heard of at Coblenz, Germany, as field clerk with American Army Occupation. May now be in Central or South America. Mother very anxious to hear from him or news of his whereabouts.—Address G. A. WELLS, Box 409 New Albany, Ind.

McCONNELL, JOHN and MAY. Formerly of Grayville, Ill. Moved to Mo. several years ago. Related to Hoovers of Grayville, Ill. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MRS. HARRY JACKSON, 1320 7th Ave., Seattle, Washington.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ROSNER, DOM E. (Uncle). Last heard from 1919. He was then at Columbia, Absorakee, Carbon Co., Montana. Age now 62 years, height about six feet. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address FRED HOERGER, JR., 2624 N. 28th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

SOUTHWICK, ALFRED WHALES. Left his home at Southwick's Grove, Middletown, R. I., March 21, 1884. Last heard from was in Baltimore, Md., in June 1884, when he stated that he was going cruising in the rivers and creeks of Virginia on a yacht called the *Petrel*. He is five feet, 8 inches tall, light complexion, small gray eyes, age about 65 years. Has birth-mark of a perfect outline of a fish on his left fore-arm. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his son.—Address ALFRED W. SOUTHWICK, 23 Tilden Ave., Newport, R. I.

ZEIT, LOUIS. Born in Kalish, Austria. Last heard of was in the Navy at the age of 16 years. Blond hair, blue eyes. His address at the time of his enlistment was at 753 McKeeran St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Any information will be appreciated by his father.—Address DAVID ZEIT, 753 E. 5th St., New York, N. Y.

BATEMAN, LEONARD. Formerly of Baltimore, Md. Left Minneapolis Sept. 1915. Valuable information awaiting him.—Address CHARLES E. BATEMAN, 1618 W. 28th St., Minneapolis, Minn.

HUCHT, AUGUST, THOMAS. Reported dead in 1909, but it was later learned that he was living somewhere in Everett, Washington, under an assumed name. Any information will be appreciated by his cousin.—Address MRS. IRENE CALVIN, 1319 Fraser St., Bay City, Michigan.

RAVENSWOOD, EDWARD. Your partner Frank Lund drowned at sea. For particulars write.—Address D. S. STONER, 626 Exchange Block, San Francisco, Calif.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Sept. 10 or Sept. 20th issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

ABEL, FRED; Brown, Wm., Burton, Thomas E.; Conway, Charles LeRoy; Craft, Felix Werner; Dennehy, Timothy; Donohue, Bill; Dubois, Joe; Fisherman, Allen, Gonlda; Foster, Lenora; Gatlyn; Goodson, Clarence, Eugene; Gorton, Roma S.; John R.; MacDonald, Jim; Mally, Ted G.; McNamee, Joseph T.; Miller, George B. or Albert (brothers); Morton, William H.; Myers, Mrs.; O'Rourke, Larry; Pafford, William; Parent, Joe (Bully); Pugh, Sidney, Richard; Schafer, Thelma & Mary (sisters); Slavin, Jos. Patrick; Teague, Oscar R.; Turbush, Richard (Dick); Williams, Calude; Williams, George, Bert; Wood, Theodore; Young, Derony.

MISCELLANEOUS:—"Rondo Seadogo Ahoy," "Pop" Polinkas, "Tex" Russell, "Dad" Hodge and any other of the "Ronde" crew, also shipmates of the tugboats *Penobscot*, *Nahant* or *Conestago* and mates of Co. F. 2nd. Ala. Inf.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

OCTOBER 20TH ISSUE

Besides the complete novel and the new serial mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

LURE OF THE SEA — ***Bill Adams***
"Who wouldn't sell a farm and go to sea?"

WHO KEEP THE DESERT LAW — ***Nictzin Dyalhis***
Inez, the ancient squaw, adopts a bad-man.

WHEN A WITCH-DOCTOR LOVES — ***Santie Sabalala***
In a pair of sandals a snake's fangs are secreted.

SHIPWRECKED — ***Frederick Moore***
Tribal warfare and white "diplomacy" in the Philippines.

OVER THE RIM OF THE RIDGE **A Four-Part Story** **Conclusion** — ***Hugh Pendexter***
The coming of law and order to Virginia City.

A STRANGE COMPANY — ***F. St. Mars***
What happened to an ocelot when a giant tree fell into the Amazon.

THE OUTLAW — ***Will MacMahon***
A malemiut trained for the "pit" has other desires.

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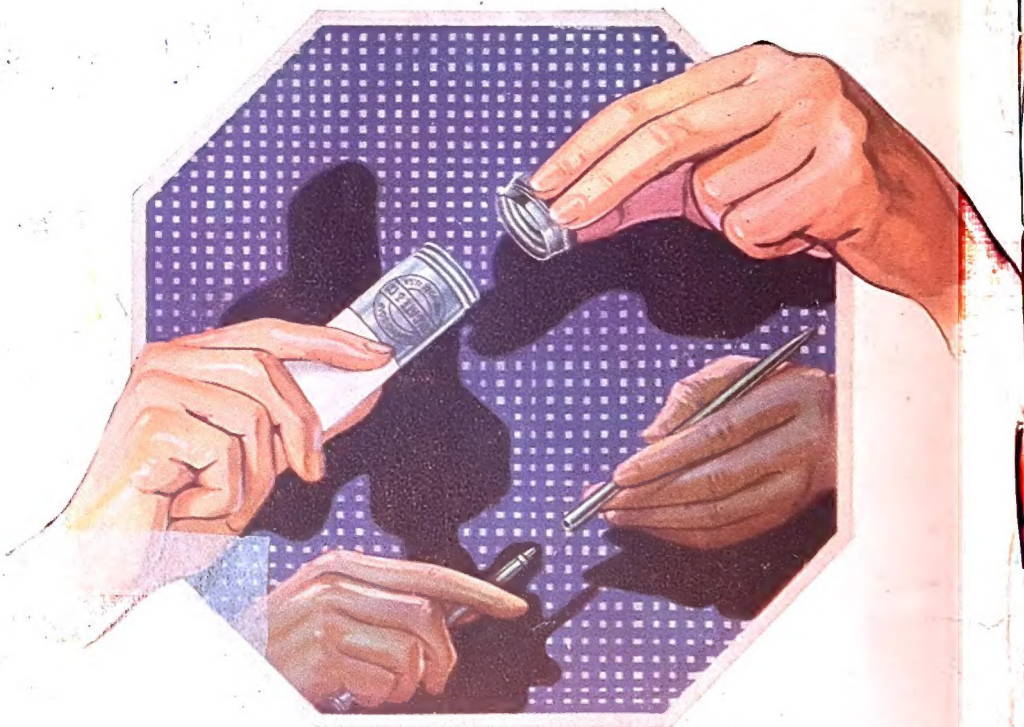
COLGATE'S

"HANDY GRIP"

The Refill Shaving Stick



Easier than Renewing the Lead in a Metal Pencil

PUTTING a Colgate "Refill" Shaving Stick into the "Handy Grip" is like putting a new lead in a metal pencil—but easier, and done in an instant.

The "Handy Grip" and container will last for years. "Refills" cost the price of the soap alone.

Lather with Colgate's, and shave with comfort. Use hot or cold water. The fragrant, softening lather needs no mussy rubbing in with the fingers. It makes shaving easy, and leaves the face cool and refreshed.

The stick is the most economical form of shaving soap. We can give you this assurance impartially, since we make shaving powder and cream, as well as shaving sticks. But if you *prefer* cream, you will acknowledge when you have shaved with Colgate's Rapid-Shave Cream that you never knew before how good a shaving cream could be. It is one of our latest products, made on a new principle, and brought to perfection after years of scientific effort.

COLGATE & CO. *Dept.* C 199 Fulton St., N. Y.

The metal "Handy Grip," containing a trial size stick of Colgate's Shaving Soap, sent for 10c. When the trial stick is used up you can buy the Colgate "Refills," for the price of the soap alone. There are 350 shaves in a Colgate Shaving Stick—double the number you can get from a tube of cream at the same price.

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